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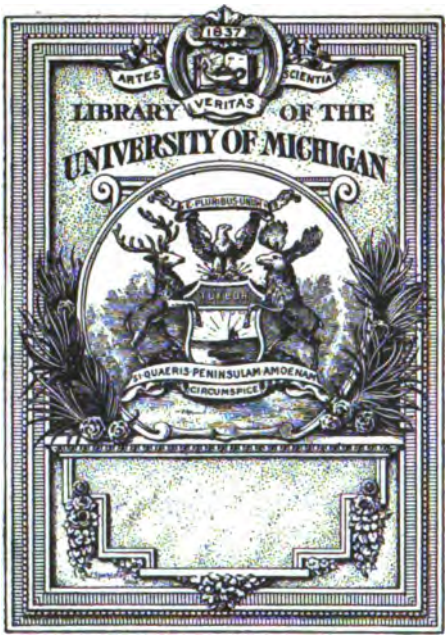
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"Laden with Golden Grain."

THE

ARGOSY.

EDITED BY

MRS. HENRY WOOD.

VOLUME XIX.

January to June, 1875.

RICHARD BENTLEY & SON,
8, NEW BURLINGTON STREET, LONDON, W.
Publishers in Ordinary to Her Majesty.

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LONDON:
PRINTED BY J. OGDEN AND CO.,
172, ST. JOHN STREET, E.C.

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ESCAPED.

THE ARGOSY.

JANUARY, 1875.

A SECRET OF THE SEA.

By the Author of "In the Dead of Night."

CHAPTER I.

IN THE LAWYER'S OFFICE.

IT was a December morning, clear and frosty. The timepiece in the office of Matthew Kelvin, attorney-at-law, Pembridge, Hertfordshire, racing noisily after the grave old Abbey clock which had just done chiming, pointed to the hour of ten. With his back to the welcome fire, and turning over yesterday's *Times* with an air of contemptuous indifference, stood Mr. Podley Piper—whose baptismal name was universally shortened into "Pod"—a short, thickset young gentleman of the mature age of fifteen. His nose was a pure specimen of a pug, and his short scrubby hair was of a colour sufficiently pronounced to earn him the nickname of "Carroty Pod" from sundry irreverent small boys of his acquaintance. His nose and his hair notwithstanding, Pod was a keen, bright-looking lad, with an air of shrewdness and decision about him by no means common in one of his age.

"Awfully dry reading—the *Times*," muttered Pod, tossing the paper on Mr. Kelvin's desk. "Only one suicide, and not a single murder in it. It's not worth buying. And yet there must be something in it, or so many people wouldn't read it. I suppose that by the time I'm fifty, and wear creaky shoes and carry a big gold watch in my fob, and have to count my hairs every morning to see that I haven't lost one overnight,—I suppose, when that time comes, I shall think as much of the *Times* as Sir Thomas Dudgeon does. But just at present I'd rather read the 'Bounding Wolf of the Prairies.'"

Hardly were the last words out of Pod's mouth, when the inner door opened, and Matthew Kelvin walked silently into the room. In silence he sat down at his desk, after one sharp glance at Pod and another at the fire, and set to work at once at the task immediately

before him. This task was the opening of the pile of post letters which had been placed ready to his hand by Pod. A brief glance at the contents of each was generally sufficient. In very few cases did he trouble himself to read a letter entirely through. Three or four of the more important documents were put aside to be attended to specially by himself; the rest of them had a corner turned up on which Pod pencilled down in shorthand Mr. Kelvin's instructions for the guidance of Mr. Bray, his chief clerk. It was his cleverness at shorthand that had gained Pod his present situation.

"That will do," said Mr. Kelvin, after a few minutes of this sharp work. "Give those papers to Mr. Bray, and tell him not to come in till I ring."

Something out of the ordinary way was evidently the matter with Mr. Kelvin this morning. After making one or two futile attempts to read over for the second time, and more carefully than before, the letters left behind by Pod, he gave up the attempt as a bad job. "I don't feel as if I could settle down to anything this morning," he said. "And no wonder. How well the secret has been kept! Even I had not the remotest suspicion of such a thing. What a strange example of the irony of events that I, of all men in the world, should have to break these tidings to Eleanor! What will my proud beauty say when I tell her? I could never have devised so exquisite a revenge. And yet it is not my hand that will drag her down. It is the hand of Jacob Lloyd that smites her from out his grave."

He fell into a reverie which lasted till he was disturbed by a knock at the door. "Come in," he said mechanically, and the head of Pod was thrust into the room.

"A lady to see you, sir. Says her name is Miss Deane."

"Olive Deane!" said Mr. Kelvin, in surprise. "Show her in."

Matthew Kelvin at this time was thirty-five years old. He was a handsome, large-nosed man, with full grey eyes and rather prominent teeth. He was already partially bald; but what hair he had left was carefully trimmed and parted down the middle, while his bushy dark brown whiskers showed no traces of age. He always dressed well, and was very particular as to his boots and gloves and the cut of his trousers. He had studied the art of dress as carefully as he had studied many other things, and the result was a success.

For his inferiors and those in his employ, Mr. Kelvin had a brusque, imperious manner that was not unmixed with a sort of hard contemptuousness. For his rich clients and those above him in the social scale, he had a pleasant, smiling, dégagé style, which sat upon him so easily and naturally that it was impossible to doubt its genuineness. To such people he was a man who never seemed to have much to do beyond trimming the nails of his very white hands, and sniffing at the choice flowers in his button-hole, and now and then dashing off his

signature at the foot of some document which he never seemed to be at the trouble of reading.

Yet no one ever seemed to doubt Matthew Kelvin's ability in his profession, unprofessional as he was—judged by the ordinary types of provincial lawyers—in many of his ways and doings. But, then, he was a sort of second cousin to Sir Frederick Carstairs of Wemley, and that perhaps made some difference. Many people thought it did, for the Carstairs were a very old family; and where's the use of having good blood in one's veins unless it declares itself in some shape or other?

Mr. Kelvin was fond of hunting, and subscribed liberally to the Thorndale pack. Few faces were more familiar in the field than his, and he was always nominated as one of the stewards of the Hunt Ball. Having a good voice, and being fond of singing, it was only natural that he should be a member of the Pembridge Catch Club; besides this, he was chairman of the Literary Institute. One winter he gave a couple of lectures on "Some Recent Discoveries in Astronomy," with illustrative drawings by himself: while on more than one occasion he had treated the whole of the workhouse children to an Orrery or a Panorama, and even to that wicked place—the Circus.

Matthew Kelvin lived with his mother, in the house where he had been born. His father had been dead some twelve years when we first make his acquaintance. The business had come down from his grandfather, who had been the first Matthew Kelvin known in Pembridge.

Perhaps the finest trait in Matthew's character was his love and reverence for his mother, who had been more or less of an invalid for many years. For her sake, when she was ill, and hungered for his presence by her bedside, he would give up his most pressing engagements, and sit by the hour together reading novels to her—a class of literature to which he rarely condescended at other times. Mrs. Kelvin, who was a sensible, clear-sighted woman enough in the ordinary affairs of life, still cherished a strange preference for the milk-and-water novels and vapid romances of the Minerva Press school, such as had been fashionable when she was a girl; and it was pleasant to see her son reading out this rubbish to her with the gravest air possible, hiding his contempt and weariness under a well-feigned interest in the fortunes and misfortunes of some book-muslin heroine, or some hero with chiselled features who was never anything less than a lord in disguise.

Of such books as these Mrs. Kelvin never seemed to tire. It may be that they carried her back for a little while to the days of her youth, when she too was young and blooming; and that when buried in their pages she forgot for a brief hour or two that she was nothing now but a grey-haired woman—old, sickly, and a widow.

There were people still alive in Pembridge, to whom the one romantic episode in the life of Barbara Kelvin was known in all its details. It was this:—The present Matthew Kelvin's father had run away with

and married Miss Barbara Carstairs, an orphan niece of the late Sir Frederick Carstairs of Wemley, one of the chief magnates for twenty miles round. Miss Carstairs, to be sure, had not a penny that she could call her own, and was living the life of a genteel dependent at Wemley, when young Kelvin—who was passing backwards and forwards between Sir Frederick and his father, in connection with certain law business—persuaded her to elope. But the fact that Miss Carstairs' sole earthly possessions consisted of the clothes on her back and a solitary spade guinea in her purse, by no means lessened the magnitude of the offence of which the audacious young lawyer had been guilty. There was an outcry of horror, accompanied by a turning up of eyes and a holding up of hands, as the news spread from one country house to another; but nothing could be done save to excommunicate the late Miss Carstairs, with "bell, book, and candle," and try to forget that any such creature had ever had an existence.

Whether, when the romance of girlhood was over, Mrs Kelvin ever regretted that she had forgotten the obligations of caste in order to become the wife of a provincial lawyer, was a fact best known to herself; but if any such regret ever made itself felt at her heart, it never found expression at her lips. Her husband was fond of her and never stinted her in any way, and her life, quiet though it was, was not without its consolations. It was surely well to have a husband and a home, and to be the recognized leader of middle-class Pembridge society. Like a sensible woman, she made the best of her position. She had her little re-unions, her Tuesdays, when everybody that was worth knowing in Pembridge met in the little drawing-room over her husband's office, and where her simple hospitalities were dispensed with a grace and refinement that would have done no discredit to Wemley itself. But all those things now belonged to the past. At the time we make Mrs. Kelvin's acquaintance she had seen her sixtieth birthday, and was a confirmed invalid.

This home of the Kelvins for three generations was a substantially-built red-brick house that dated from the era of the second George. It was not in the Pembridge main street, but formed one of a dozen houses similar to itself in a short retired street that opened out of the busier thoroughfare. It was the kind of house that—if houses could do such things—you would naturally expect to shrink into its foundations with horror, if ever compelled to have for its next-door neighbour anything so vulgar as a shop. The massive front door, with its lion's head knocker, opened into a good-sized entrance-hall, at the far end of which was a tiny glass-fronted den sacred to the use of Mr. Piper; from which coign of vantage that ingenuous youth could see everybody who came in or went out, could tell this person to wait or usher that one into his master's office, and answer all inquiries; and could furthermore refresh himself by keeping up a guerilla warfare of repartee and chaff with the

clerks as they passed into or out of their office. On the left as you entered from the street was the door which opened into Matthew Kelvin's private office. On the right hand were, first, the door which opened into the clerks' office, and, secondly, the door of a waiting-room. Beyond these was a door which opened on to a private staircase. The real entrance to the private part of the house was down a covered passage at the side. Such passages were by no means infrequent in Pembridge. Many of the best houses in the place opened, not from the street, but from these side entries. Behind the house was an extensive piece of garden ground, containing fruit trees and rustic seats, and any quantity of old-fashioned sweet-smelling flowers such as our grandfathers and grandmothers dearly loved, but which look so dreadfully out of place in these days of riband-gardening and floral mathematics.

"Why, who on earth expected to see you?" said Mr. Kelvin, as he shook hands heartily with Miss Deane.

"Not you, I daresay, Matthew," answered Miss Deane, with a blush and a little sigh, as she looked straight into his handsome face.

"Why not I as much as anyone?" queried her cousin with a smile, as he placed a chair for her at no great distance from his own. "You always were fond of change, Olive."

She smiled again, a little bitterly. "Why don't you add—like all my sex?"

"Because I was speaking to one of your sex. Had I been talking to a man, I should probably have used those very words. Olive, I'm really glad to see you, whether you come holiday-making, or whether you come because you have left Lady —— Lady ——?"

"Lady Culloden. Yes, I have left her. I grew tired of my situation. Slights innumerable: one petty insult after another: my position not properly recognised: till at last I felt that I must speak my mind or die. I did speak my mind, and in a way that her ladyship is not likely to forget. We parted. I felt a longing to see Pembridge and my old friends. I wanted to see my aunt —— and you."

"You know that you are always sure of a welcome here."

"But my aunt—how is she?" asked Miss Deane.

"No better, I am sorry to say; neither do I see much prospect of her ever being so. She is confined very much to her own room."

"Poor dear aunt! I am very very sorry to hear that she is no better. Does she keep up her good spirits?"

"Yes," replied Mr. Kelvin; "her spirits are, as they have always been, something wonderful."

"I believe, Matthew, that I love her better than I ever loved my own mother."

"No one can know my mother without liking her," he returned.

"And then what a gentlewoman she is!" said Olive. "There is as

much difference between her and Lady Culloden as there is between a flower cut out of a turnip and a real camellia."

Olive Deane at this time was twenty-eight years old. The money which her mother—a sister of the second Matthew Kelvin—had taken as a dowry to her husband had soon been squandered in wild speculations, and it had been impressed upon Olive's mind, almost from the time when she could remember anything, that she would have to earn her own living; and she started with that idea the very first day she went to school. Her mother died when she was ten years old, and her father when she was fifteen; and from the latter age till now she had been altogether dependent on her own exertions for her daily bread. The Kelvins would gladly have assisted her, both then and subsequently, but the girl would accept no help. She went out as nursery governess in the first instance, and had gone on, step by step, till she could now command her ninety or hundred guineas a year as finishing governess in families of distinction. Olive Deane had taken to teaching as naturally as a duck takes to water. She had had five years at a really good French school before her father's death, but everything else she owed to her own love of knowledge and indomitable perseverance. The wasteful extravagance of which she had been a witness when a child at home had not been without its effect upon her. She grew up thrifty, self-denying, economical in every way; and now, at twenty-eight years of age, she was mistress of four hundred pounds, which her cousin Matthew had advantageously invested for her in Pembridge gas shares.

Olive's sole recreation was a visit now and then to the theatre. A classical play of the sterling old school, she delighted in. She was an omnivorous reader. Anything, from a French novel to the last philosophical essay, had an interest for her. To learn: to know: was all she asked. The quality of the knowledge mattered little or nothing. Wherever she might be, she generally contrived to have half an hour's reading of the *Times*, to keep herself *au courant* with the chief political movements of the day. She had a clear hard masculine intellect, with no sentimental nonsense about it, as her cousin Matthew often declared —and he was a great admirer of Olive: in fact, he had been heard to say that if Olive had been a man he would have made her his partner long ago.

Miss Deane was a little above the ordinary stature of her sex. She had a lithe, slender figure, and in all her movements she was graceful, easy, and self-possessed. She had clearly-cut, well-defined features, and many people would have called her handsome. But she certainly lacked colour. Her clear olive complexion—strangely in accordance with her name—was too clear and too colourless. Only on very rare occasions was its waxen pallor flushed through with the faintest tinge of red. She had magnificent eyebrows, and eyes of the darkest brown, that looked jet-black by candlelight, with a keen, watchful look in

them, begotten, perhaps, of the time when, little more than a child, she had to fight her way through the world and found a thorn or a pitfall at every step she took. Her hair, too, was black, but a dull, dead, lustreless black, without the slightest gloss of brightness in it, and very fine in quality. She almost invariably dressed in black, with white linen cuffs turned up from the wrist, and a white linen turn-down collar fastened with a simple bow of mauve or violet riband. No ear-rings, no brooch, no ornaments of any kind visible, except an inch of the gold chain that held her watch.

"I thought we should have heard the news of your wedding before now, Olive," said Mr. Kelvin.

"The news of my wedding, Matthew! You will never hear that."

"Never is a long word, Olive. Such a nice clever girl as you are can't be destined to live and die an old maid."

Olive's black eyebrows came together for a moment, and she tapped the floor impatiently with her foot.

"It almost seemed at one time, Olive, as if you and I would have come together," went on Kelvin, while his fingers toyed absently with a paper-knife. "Those were pleasant days—those old days on the sands at Redcar, when I was recovering from my sprain, and you did your best to nurse me. You used to read novels to me, and play to me on that vile old lodging-house piano; and out of gratitude I taught you cribbage and écarté. I have never enjoyed a holiday like that. Do you remember our long row by moonlight, and how we kissed as we stepped out of the boat on to the wet sands?"

No word from Olive: only a far-away look in her eyes, and the thin straight line of her lips looking thinner and straighter than before.

"And yet it all came to nothing!" resumed Kelvin, glancing carelessly at her. "It might have come to something: who knows? Only two hours later I was telegraphed for to London, and ——"

"And, as you say, Matthew," interrupted Olive, "it came to nothing. So much the better probably for both of us."

"Certainly so much the better for you, Olive, but whether or not for me may be open to doubt. Why, even in these old days that now seem so far away, when you and I were girl and boy together, how fond we were of each other! Do you remember that afternoon when the swing broke down and I pitched on my head, and how you cried over my bruises as if your heart would break?"

"I have not forgotten," said Olive in a low voice.

"Whenever I go into a chemist's shop it takes me back in memory to your father's little surgery. How cleverly you used to help him with his drugs and mixtures! You seemed to know the contents of every gallipot and bottle almost as well as he did. If you had been a man you would have been a doctor."

"Possibly so," said Olive.

"I remember when farmer Sinclair's dog bit you," continued Mr. Kelvin, "how bravely you bore the pain. The dog died a week after, and some people said you had poisoned it, but I scouted the idea."

"But I did poison the brute," replied Olive.

"You did!"

"Why not? It bit me in the wrist. I have the scar now. It was not fit to live."

Matthew Kelvin shrugged his shoulders, but did not rejoin.

"But why call up such reminiscences?" said Olive. "I want to hear about yourself. A rising man like you, Matthew—a man born to fight his way upward—how is it that you are still unmarried? A rich wife would do so much to help forward your ambitious schemes!"

"My ambitious schemes, indeed!" said Kelvin, with a sly twinkle in his eye. "What has a simple-minded country lawyer like me to do with ambition?"

"I know you too well, Matthew, not to feel sure that in ten years from this time you hope to be in a very different position."

Kelvin dropped the paper-knife with which he had been playing, and gazed steadily at his cousin for a moment before speaking. Her eyes met his unshrinkingly.

"You are right, Olive," he said, speaking gravely enough now. "I *do* cherish some strangely bold dreams. I *am* an ambitious man; but you are the only person who seems to have divined that fact. I am far richer than the world knows of; and, but that it would almost break my mother's heart, I should have given up the old business years ago. In any case I shall dispose of it before long. I can afford now to put it behind me. The first step in my ambition is to get into Parliament. ——And so you think I ought to get married, eh?"

"Yes—to a woman who could help you forward in your career by sympathising with and comprehending the aims and objects of your ambition. No mere drawing-room doll must be your wife, but a woman fitted in heart and brain to be your companion."

"I won't say that you are not right," said Mr. Kelvin, "But in these matters men rarely do that which their friends think they ought to do. Cupid, you know, never went to school, and his problems cannot be worked out by rule-of-three."

"That may apply to a very young man, who lacks sense to know what is best for him and where to look for it; but not to you."

"That is just where you make a mistake, Olive. What will you say of my strength of mind—of my common sense—when I tell you that I have fallen in love with a simple country girl with nothing to recommend her save a pretty face and the finest eyes in the world?"

Olive Deane rose slowly to her feet. Her face grew whiter; her eyes blacker; her thick brows made a straight unbroken line across her forehead. If looks had power to slay, Mr. Kelvin would have been

annihilated on the spot. But his face was turned the other way. His own thoughts held him. He was gazing meditatively into the fire.

"And she—she accepted you, of course?" said Olive at last, her voice hardly raised above a whisper.

"On the contrary, she rejected me."

"How I hate her for it!" Then she added under her breath: "But I should have hated her worse if she had accepted him."

"You are the only person in the world, Olive, to whom I have breathed a word of this."

"Your confidence is safe with me, Matthew."

"I am sure of that, and it is a relief to me to talk to you. To you, Olive, I can always talk as to a sister."

"Yes—as to a sister," she said with a slow nod of the head. Then she shivered slightly, as if with cold, and held out her hands to the blaze. "Go on, Matthew. You are sure of my sympathy in any case."

"Need I tell you any more, Olive?"

"I want you to tell me all about the affair, from beginning to end. You have piqued my curiosity, and now you must satisfy it."

Kelvin paused for a moment or two as if to pull himself together. "It seems strange to take even you into my confidence," he said, "and yet I feel as if I must tell some one—especially after what happened yesterday. To begin, then: I fell in love with this girl, Eleanor Lloyd—madly, desperately, in love. Her father, Jacob Lloyd, was a well-to-do small landowner whose affairs I managed for him. He seconded my suit, but, as I have said already, the girl rejected me. I am a patient man. I waited six months, and then I spoke to Miss Lloyd again—spoke more warmly and strongly than a less infatuated man would have done. Again she rejected me, this time in a way that I can neither forget nor forgive. I vowed that I would some day humble her haughty pride—and that day has come. Six months ago Jacob Lloyd died without a will. He had been speculating greatly for years, and Eleanor Lloyd, much to her own surprise and that of everyone else, found herself an heiress to the amount of something over twenty thousand pounds. When I first knew this, I thought that the day of my revenge had gone by for ever. But I was wrong. Such was the state of affairs yesterday: to-day they are very different."

"In what way are they different to-day?"

"Listen. Yesterday there came into my hands certain documentary proofs, full and complete, of the truth of what I am now going to tell you. Eleanor Lloyd is not the daughter of Jacob Lloyd, nor any relation of his whatever. She is neither more nor less than a child adopted in infancy by him and his wife, they having no family of their own. The fortune left by Jacob Lloyd is the property of a nephew, Gerald Warburton, now living somewhere among the wilds of Ireland—and the woman who rejected me is an absolute pauper."

"A strange story: a very strange story, indeed, cousin Matthew!"

"Eleanor Lloyd has to come here two hours hence to sign certain deeds. She will enter this room a rich woman; she will leave it penniless!"

"And you will be revenged?"

"And I shall be revenged."

They were both silent, thinking their own thoughts.

"Where has she been living since the death of her father?" said Olive.

"She has been living very quietly at Bridgeley, her own home."

"But has it not been her intention to take up a position in society, such as her supposed wealth would entitle her to occupy?"

"Lady Dudgeon, the wife of one of our Pembridge magnates, has taken her by the hand and has constituted herself Miss Lloyd's chaperone. Eleanor is to accompany her ladyship to London in the spring, and will then make her début."

"To how many people is Miss Lloyd's true parentage known?"

"Not a soul in the world knows of it except myself—and you."

"Good. And your idea of revenge is to break this news to Miss Lloyd suddenly—here—this very morning—and so crush her?"

"It is."

"A man's idea—poor and commonplace. Shall I tell you what mine—a woman's—idea of revenge would be in such a case?"

"You are a clever girl, Olive, and you pique my curiosity."

"Were I in your place, I would keep my discovery a profound secret for twelve months to come. I would let her, for twelve golden months, taste all the pleasures that wealth can confer. I would let her go on till a life of ease and self-indulgence should have become as it were a second nature to her. I would let her live on in blissful ignorance of the thunderbolt you have in store for her till she has learned to love—till she is engaged to be married."

"Eleanor married to another! I never thought of that," said Kelvin under his breath.

"Then, when you think the comedy has lasted long enough, you shall go to her some day when she is surrounded by her fine friends—on her wedding morning itself, if it so please you—and, touching her on the shoulder, you shall say to her: 'Eleanor Lloyd, you are a beggar!' Her fall from wealth to poverty will then seem infinitely greater than it would do now, and yours will be a revenge worthy of the name."

"A devilish scheme, Olive, and one which only an Italian—or a woman—would have thought of!"

"You flatter me," said Olive, with a little lifting of the shoulders, and the ghost of a smile playing round her thin lips.

To say that Mr. Kelvin was thoroughly startled by the proposition,

is to say no more than the truth. Olive was right. There would be a refinement—a subtlety—about such a scheme which his own altogether lacked. But, would it not be a mean and dastardly advantage to take of an innocent girl like Eleanor Lloyd? He got up from his chair and crossed to the window, and then walked slowly back again and sat down without a word. He was a man whom circumstances had never before tempted to step out of the beaten track of morality. The orthodox path had for him been paved with golden guineas. So far as he had seen, it was only reprobates who went astray, or were foolish enough to do anything which the general opinion of society condemned; simpletons, in fact, who could not understand that to do right—in a worldly point of view—was a far better paying game than to do the opposite. But Olive's words had found the weak place in his armour. His judgment did not fail him so utterly as to mislead him with regard to the meanness of what he meditated, but his own wishes and desires in the matter threw a sort of lime-light glamour over it, which made it seem something altogether different from what it really was.

"I'll do it, Olive," he said at last. "Yes; for good or for evil, I'll do it! I will crush her proud spirit to the dust. I will humiliate her as she humiliated me. She shall suffer as I suffered. I will repay scorn with scorn: insult with insult. At the moment of her greatest triumph I will strip her of love, of wealth, of friendship; and show her to the world for what she really is—a pauper and an outcast!"

"Bravely spoken, Matthew! Don't let her soft looks or winning ways melt you from your purpose," said Olive, as she pushed back her chair. "And now I will go upstairs to my aunt."

Kelvin had put his elbows on the table, and was resting his face in his hands. Olive stood looking down at him for a moment. There was a tear in the corner of her eye, but a smile played round her mouth. She went up to him and laid her hand gently on his shoulder. "I shall see you later in the day, shall I not?"

"Yes—later in the day," he answered, absently, without looking up.

Olive went: and presently Mr. Piper's head came in.

"Captain Dixon, sir, has sent for you. He's been taken ill and wants his will drawn up without delay."

Kelvin roused himself from his abstraction. "Another fool who has put off till the day of his death what he ought to have done years ago." He began to put his papers together, but still in an absent-minded way. "This is a damnable thing to do. I despise myself for promising to do it," he muttered. "And yet why should she not suffer? I have only to call to mind her words—her looks—that summer evening in the garden, when for the second time I pleaded my love before her: I have only to remember how she turned on me, as if I were a reptile, to feel my purpose harden within me, and every grain of pity melt out of my soul!"

CHAPTER II.

MISS BELLAMY.

THE place was Miss Bellamy's lodgings in Ormond Square, Bayswater, and the time eight p.m., on a frosty evening in mid-winter. The people were two: Miss Bellamy herself, and her guest, Mr. Gerald Warburton.

Miss Bellamy was forty-five years of age, but looked older. She was spare in person and lengthy in nose, but still retained considerable traces of former good looks. She wore her hair, which was fast turning grey, in three old-fashioned curls fastened down with combs on either side her face. She always wore silk in an afternoon, either brown or black—thick, rustling silk, made to wear and last, that would turn and dye, and then look nearly as good as new. Privately, Miss Bellamy used spectacles, but no one had ever seen her wear them except Eliza, the maid-of-all-work; and it was currently reported in the house that that young person had been bribed with two half-crowns never to divulge the terrible secret.

Gerald Warburton was a tall, dark-complexioned young fellow, some six or seven and twenty years old. He had a refined aquiline face, a pair of dark eyes, behind which a smile seemed always to be lurking, and black silky hair. He had an easy, lounging, graceful manner, more common among Frenchmen or Italians than among us stiff-necked islanders; but then, he had lived so much abroad that he could hardly be said to belong to one country more than another. He possessed the happy faculty of adapting himself with ease to whatever place or persons he might be associated with. Whether living among Laps and reindeer, or smoking the pipe of peace in an Indian wigwam, he made himself equally at home; and, what was still rarer, he made those with whom he happened to be feel that, for the time being, he was one of themselves. No Frenchman would have made a mistake as to his nationality, but in a walk down Regent Street or Pall Mall it is not improbable that half the people who noticed him would have set him down as a foreigner.

Just now he was employed, after a thoroughly English fashion, in the slow but sure consumption of a thoroughly English beefsteak. Occasionally he paused to refresh himself from the cup of fragrant tea at his elbow. Miss Bellamy sat opposite to him, looking on with admiring eyes. The more beefsteak he ate and the more tea he drank, the more Miss Bellamy admired him, from which we may conclude that she at least was thoroughly English. Gerald had just reached London after twenty-four hours of unbroken travelling.

"I wish I could induce you to take another lump of sugar in your tea," said Miss Bellamy. "I never think that you get the real flavour of the leaf without plenty of sugar to assist it."

"There you must allow me to differ from you," said Gerald. "To put sugar in tea seems to me simply to spoil it." Miss Bellamy smiled and shook her head.

"Then you really have some faint recollection of having seen me when you were a child?" she said, after a pause.

"Yes, a very clear and distinct recollection of sitting on your knee and being fed with sugar plums."

"Ah, you are far too big now to care for sugar plums," said Miss Bellamy with a little sigh.

"Not at all too big. Only that I now require a different kind of sugar plum to keep me good, from those I cared for then."

"Why, you could not have been more than four years old!"

"I suppose that was about my age."

"And I never saw your poor dear mamma after that day!"

"I was just ten years old when I lost my mother," said Gerald, gravely.

"Four of us, there were, all bosom friends, and they called us the Four Graces in the little town where we were born and brought up; and now I am the only one that is left alive!" said Miss Bellamy, with a little quaver in her voice. "There was Ellen Barry: she married your uncle, Jacob Lloyd. Then there was Minna, Jacob's sister, who married your father. The third was Mary Greaves, who married Mr. Ambrose Murray. There seemed to be no husband left for me: but, thank Heaven, I have never felt the need of one!"

"It is never too late to make a change for the better," said Gerald, demurely, as he pushed away his plate.

"In my case it would have been for the worse. I should only have tormented some poor man's life out of him, and no one can lay that to my charge now."

As soon as Eliza had cleared the table, Miss Bellamy put a tiny copper kettle to simmer on the hob, and then produced a bottle of whiskey, a lemon, and the other materials necessary for brewing a glass of punch. From another cupboard she brought out a box of cigars, which she had made a special journey into the City to buy. Being no judge of such articles, or their cost, she had brought back a box of what Mr. Piper would have called "duffers."

"Snuff-taking among gentlemen is going quite out of fashion nowadays," said Miss Bellamy to herself. "But I've no doubt Gerald is fond of a cigar, and I'll not trouble about the curtains for once."

"You don't seem in the least curious about the news I've got to tell you," said Miss Bellamy at last.

"No, I'm very comfortable," said Gerald as he sipped his grog, "and I don't know that a man can wish to be more."

"And yet you have come all the way from the south of France to hear it?"

"And yet I have come all the way from France to hear it! But I daresay it will keep a little longer."

"Just your poor mother's careless way of looking at things," said Miss Bellamy with a smile and a shake of the head. "Just the same easy way that I remember so well." She gazed into the fire for a few moments, her mind far away among the things of the past.

"How long did you say that your father has been dead, Gerald?"

"A little more than two years."

"And no reconciliation ever took place between your uncle Jacob and him?"

"None whatever. My father knew he was in the wrong, and that only served to embitter him still more against my uncle. My uncle could neither forgive nor forget my father's cruel treatment of my mother. I believe that if a woman's heart was ever broken, hers was."

"Don't talk in that way, Gerald. You must not forget that the man was your father."

"Can I ever forget it?" said Gerald, bitterly. "You were my mother's friend, and I tell you distinctly that my father broke her heart. The bitterest tears that ever I shed, or that I ever can shed in this world, were those with which I mourned her loss."

"You left home soon afterwards, did you not?"

"I was thirteen years old when I ran away to sea. By that time my father's tyranny had become unendurable. One victim had eluded him by dying, but I was still left. On the morning of my birthday I left home to seek my fortune, my sole earthly possessions being four-and-sixpence in money, two ally-taws, an apple, and a thick slice of bread."

"But you saw your father again after that?"

"On two occasions only, and then only at an hotel where we met by appointment. Time had softened my bitterness against him, but not his against me. Had I been a dog at his feet he could hardly have treated me worse. Reconciliation on the terms proposed by him was impossible."

"Were you not with him when he died?"

"No. He died rather suddenly, and I was abroad at the time."

"But at least, he surely did not forget you in his will?"

"He left everything to different charities in the town where he died. There is some talk of erecting a statue to him."

"My poor boy! And how have you contrived to live, all these years?"

"As I best could; but all things considered, I have not done amiss. I stopped at sea till I was seventeen; then I got a situation as a storekeeper on a South American hacienda, and there I stayed till I was twenty. Growing tired of that, I set up a photographic apparatus and travelled some thousands of miles with it, earning my bread as I

went. Those were some of my happiest days. When I was of age, I came into possession of two hundred and fifty pounds a year, left me by my mother. Since that time I have lived chiefly on the Continent, pottering about among antiquities, buying now and again a bronze, a coin, or a tazza in a cheap market, and selling it in a dear one; writing at odd times an article for one or other of the magazines; having no settled home, leading a vagabond, Bohemian kind of existence, but by no means an unhappy one."

"You did hear that your uncle Lloyd was dead?"

"Quite by chance I saw the announcement in an English newspaper."

"And yet you never thought it worth your while to inquire whether he had remembered you in his will?"

"Knowing that he had a daughter, and that he had never seen me since I was six years old, it did not seem to me worth while to make any such inquiry."

"It might have been," said Miss Bellamy, drily. But Gerald said nothing.

"Your uncle died between seven and eight months ago," resumed Miss Bellamy. "I was away in Guernsey at the time, and did not hear of it till my return to London some seven weeks since. It was a great shock to me. Your aunt and I had been like sisters, and after her death the friendship between Mr. Lloyd and myself remained unbroken. It is only about eighteen months since I left Pembridge and came to reside in London; and up to that time I was a frequent visitor at Bridgeley, the place where he has lived for the last twenty years. Several years ago Mr. Lloyd put into my hands a sealed packet of papers, addressed to a certain person, and labelled 'not to be opened till after my death,' with a request that I should keep it till that event took place, and then forward it to the person to whom it was addressed. At the time that he placed the packet in my hands he told me of what the contents consisted. The chief document was a statement of certain events in his personal history which were already well known to me, and about which he and I had often talked. As already explained, I did not know of your uncle's death till six or seven weeks ago, consequently it was not till six months after that event that the packet I held could reach the person to whom it belonged. That person ought to have acted on the contents of the packet without a day's unnecessary delay. Seven weeks have gone by, and as yet he has taken no action in the matter. It is for that very reason that I sent you so imperative a summons to come to me here as quickly as possible."

Gerald stared across the table at Miss Bellamy as if he could hardly believe the evidence of his ears. "But in what possible way can all this affect me?" he asked.

"All this affects you very nearly indeed," answered Miss Bellamy. "Your uncle Lloyd had been a prudent man. When he was dead, it was discovered that he was worth something over twenty thousand pounds. He died without a will, and you are his heir-at-law."

"I my uncle's heir-at-law!" said Gerald, with a little laugh. "How can that be, my dear Miss Bellamy? You seem to forget that my uncle had a daughter."

"Your uncle had no daughter."

Gerald sat speechless for several seconds. "If my cousin Eleanor is dead, I certainly never heard of it."

"You never had a cousin Eleanor."

"My dear Miss Bellamy," said Gerald, "will you kindly run a pin into my arm, so that I may make sure I am not dreaming."

"You are not dreaming, Gerald Warburton. The young lady you have hitherto believed to be your cousin is no relation whatever to you, neither was she any relation to your uncle, Jacob Lloyd. She was simply his adopted daughter."

After hearing this startling news, Gerald's silence was not to be wondered at. He woke up like a man rousing himself from a dream. "You have all along known what you have just told me, Miss Bellamy?"

"Yes, I have known it all along. But to no one else was the secret ever imparted by your uncle and aunt. Eleanor was adopted by them when she was quite a little thing, and when they were living in a town more than two hundred miles away from Pembridge. For certain reasons, they gave her their own name. She never knew, she does not know now, that they were not really her parents. She loved them as such, and they could not have thought more tenderly of her had she been that which the world believed her to be. But Jacob Lloyd was not only a kind-hearted man: he was a just one. He shrank from revealing the truth to Eleanor while he was alive, but it was imperatively necessary, for certain reasons which I may one day explain to you, that she should become cognisant of everything after his death. Hence the sealed packet: which contains a duly authenticated statement of these facts in the fewest possible words."

"You take my breath away! There is nothing in the 'Arabian Nights' half so exciting," exclaimed Gerald.

"The one unfortunate feature of the case is this," resumed Miss Bellamy. "From what your uncle hinted to me at different times, I am perfectly convinced that it was his intention to provide very handsomely for Eleanor. Unfortunately he kept putting off the making of his will till it was too late. One morning he was found dead in his bed, and the girl whom he brought up and cherished as his own child is left an absolute beggar."

A tear stood in Miss Bellamy's eye, as she ceased speaking. "There

need be no trouble on that score," said Gerald, emphatically. "If, as you state, I am my uncle's heir, and the young lady, through an unwise oversight, has been left penniless, why, then, my duty lies clearly before me. Whatever may be the amount that will come to me from my uncle, whether it be a hundred pounds or twenty thousand pounds, this young lady, whom I cannot help looking upon as my cousin, is clearly entitled to half of it. And half of it she shall have as sure as my name is Gerald Warburton!"

"Don't make any rash promises, Gerald, in the heat of the moment. You may regret them afterwards."

"Such a promise as this I could never regret. I should indeed be base."

"It was certainly not in my province to send for you, and tell you all that you have just now heard," said Miss Bellamy, "and under other circumstances I should not have thought of doing so. The lawyer in whose hands was the management of Mr. Lloyd's affairs is the proper person to have communicated with you. He ought to have broken the news to Eleanor, and have communicated with you at the same time. The sealed packet has been in his hands for upwards of seven weeks, and, as yet, he has done neither one thing nor the other."

"May I ask how you come to know that he has not yet broken the news to Miss Lloyd?"

"Because I had a letter from Eleanor only three days ago, written from Stammars, the residence of Sir Thomas Dudgeon, where I find that she is visiting. She talks of coming to London with Lady Dudgeon very shortly, and says that her ladyship treats her quite as one of the family—proof positive that Eleanor is still living on in happy ignorance."

"Perhaps the lawyer did not know where to find me? Perhaps he has delayed breaking the news to Eleanor on that account?"

"No: I suspect that there is some other motive at the bottom of Matthew Kelvin's strange silence. He has sense enough to know that any letter addressed to you at Brexly would be sure to find you. He knows all about Brexly, and the quarrel between your father and Mr. Lloyd."

"Kelvin—Matthew Kelvin," said Gerald, musingly. "I seem to have heard that name before."

"You can readily understand why I have never breathed even the faintest suspicion of the truth to Eleanor. Such a revelation would be too painful for me to make to a person whom I have known and loved from a child. Therefore I have sent for you: and my advice is that you at once go down to Pembridge, see Mr. Kelvin, give him to understand that you know everything, and demand from him an explanation of his singular silence."

"Is this Mr. Kelvin aware that you have any knowledge of the real facts of the case?"

"No: I am convinced that he has no such knowledge."

"His silence certainly seems rather singular; but we shall probably find on inquiry that he has been ill, or away from home, or something of that sort."

Miss Bellamy shook her head. She was far from being convinced. "A clever schemer, but not to be trusted," she said, presumably with reference to Kelvin.

"But about this cousin who is no cousin—about Eleanor," said Gerald. "You know that I have never seen her. What is she like? Is she good-looking? Is she nice?"

"I don't know what you young gentlemen call nice," said Miss Bellamy. "I don't see young ladies with the eyes that you see them. Eleanor Lloyd is a dear, good girl; slightly impulsive, perhaps, but open and honest as the day—a girl that any man might be proud to call his wife."

Gerald pursed his lips a little. Miss Bellamy's outline was too vague to take his fancy. "A country-bred hoyden, evidently, with red cheeks and large hands, and a healthy appetite," he muttered to himself.

"There is one point that you have not enlightened me upon," he said presently. "But perhaps it is one on which I have no right to question you."

"Tell me what it is."

"You say that Eleanor, when an infant, was adopted by my uncle and aunt. She must have been somebody's child. You have not yet told me who and what her friends were."

Miss Bellamy's face became more grave and troubled than Gerald had yet seen it. "Pardon me," he said, "if I have unintentionally wounded your feelings."

"You have not wounded my feelings. You have only brought back the memory of a very old trouble. But, as I have told you so much, I see no reason why I should not tell you the remainder. You must learn the story sooner or later, and you had better hear it from my lips than from the lips of anyone else."

"I am so sorry——" began Gerald.

"Pray don't say another word. How were you to know?—Yes, Gerald Warburton, I will tell you the story, painful though it be—but not now. You have heard enough to ponder over and dream about for one night. I shall just mix you one more glass, and then I shall send you off to bed."

CHAPTER III.

THE STORY OF THE MURDER.

GERALD WARBURTON had not been in London for some time, and two or three days passed quickly and pleasantly away in hunting up old acquaintances, and in seeing sights that he had never seen before. Besides which, he wanted a little time to familiarize himself with the thought of his new-found fortune. By nature and disposition, he was one of the least worldly of men, and the wandering life he had led for many years had tended to make him more unpractical than he might otherwise have been. For money, as money, he cared nothing: nay, he told himself that he thoroughly despised it: but that was probably an exaggeration. He was one of those men who never think of saving—of putting away for a "rainy day," as the phrase goes—and who never can save, not even when their incomes are doubled or trebled, unless some pressure of an extreme kind (a thrifty wife, for instance, who has a will of her own) is brought to bear upon them.

As a matter of course, despite all Gerald's unpracticality, one of the most frequent thoughts in his mind just now—a thought turned over and over in his brain during his long solitary walks through London streets—was what he should do with the ten thousand pounds that was coming to him. He had quite made up his mind that the other ten thousand should be handed over to his cousin Eleanor, as he could not help still calling her to himself. Had anyone asked him a few days previously whether ten thousand pounds would have satisfied all his earthly wants from a monetary point of view, he would have laughed and answered that half that sum would satisfy his every wish. And yet, now, when so much money was really coming to him, it was quite remarkable what a long list of things that might almost be considered indispensable, he could count up in his mind. Instead of ten thousand, thirty or forty would be needed before he could get through even the first few pages of his mental catalogue.

But having got so far, Gerald was obliged to pull himself up suddenly. He called to mind that it was not ten thousand a year that he was coming into, but simply one sum of that value; and that, however pleasant it might be to think how easily and agreeably to himself he could have spent the whole of it in the course of a few days in London or Paris, it would be the height of folly so to do; such an act would indeed be killing the goose with the golden eggs. No: by judiciously investing his ten thousand pounds, he might secure for himself a comfortable little income of five hundred a year; which sum, when added to the income he could already call his own, would serve to make life tolerably pleasant in time to come. He would live in Paris, of course: somehow he always felt more at home in Paris than in

London. He would be able to dabble a little more than heretofore among his favourite bronzes, and coins, and old cups and saucers. He could afford a stall rather oftener at the Opera or the Français. He would drink a choicer wine to his dinner, and honour his wine with a better repast. A month or six weeks among the glaciers, or in the Black Forest, need no longer be a serious question with him on the score of expense. Altogether he felt very well satisfied with the pleasant future that seemed looming before him. That he was somewhat of an Epicurean, addicted to self-indulgence, and hardly knowing the meaning of self-sacrifice, cannot be denied; but it is to be hoped that we shall not altogether lose our interest in him on that account. He had many vague noble impulses, as most of us have at one time or another; but, as yet, no necessity had arisen in his life for testing whether those impulses were strong enough to bear chaining down to the hard rough usages of everyday life.

Often in his solitary musings he would ask himself of what possible use or service he was to the world in which he found himself; and now and then a dim idea would trouble him for awhile that there were many kinds of wheels turning in it, to one or other of which, if he were so minded, he might put his shoulder with some little profit both to himself and his fellows. But when next day came, it found him leading his old slip-shod far-niente kind of life. Amid the glitter and bustle of the Boulevards, noble impulses and vague ideals seemed the stuff that poets rave about, and girls weave into the tissue of their dreams.

The more Miss Bellamy saw of Gerald, the better she liked him. The easy geniality of his disposition and the soft courtesy of his manner were alike pleasing to her. Gerald, on his side, conceived a very warm regard for the true-hearted lady who had been his dead mother's dearest friend. He soon got into the way of calling her "aunt"; the relationship seemed a natural one between them, and the assumption was satisfactory to both.

Miss Bellamy's sitting-room was a pleasant apartment, with three French windows that opened on a balcony and that looked out on the grass and trees of the square. It was pleasantly furnished, too; in a somewhat old-fashioned style it must be admitted; but then, Miss Bellamy herself was somewhat old-fashioned, so that there was nothing incongruous between the room and its mistress.

One of Miss Bellamy's most valued possessions was a portrait of her uncle, the late Dean of Winstead. It was a three-quarter-length in oils, with a very ornate frame, and it occupied a post of honour, being hung immediately over the chimney-piece, where it at once attracted the eyes of all who came into the room. The Dean, a very atrabilious-looking gentleman, with a bald head, was represented as seated at a table with one elbow resting on three thick volumes of his own

sermons, and with his thumb and forefinger pressed lightly against his cheek. Pens and ink were upon the table, and the Dean was presumably thinking out another of his discourses. Several copies of his sermons, together with an income of three hundred a year, had come to Miss Bellamy on the death of her reverend relative, so that she had ample reasons for cherishing his memory. You could not pay Miss Bellamy a higher compliment than to tell her that there was a strong family likeness between herself and her uncle, and her admiration for him rose almost to the height of hero-worship. She made a point of reading one of his sermons through every Sunday of her life. Her firm belief was that there were no such eloquent and soul-stirring appeals to an unawakened conscience to be met with in the lukewarm religious literature of to-day, and that you must go back to the days of Jeremy Taylor to find anything like their equal. From long habit, when sitting near a table, either thinking or working, she naturally fell into the same pose as that of the Dean in his picture—her elbow resting on the table, her thumb and forefinger pressed against her cheek—and those who knew her weakness—her friends, her toadies, and her pensioners—whenever they saw her sitting thus, would not fail to remark to her how like she was to her Very Reverend Uncle.

However deeply Gerald's curiosity might be excited to hear the sequel of the strange story which Miss Bellamy had promised to tell him, the subject was evidently so painful a one to her that he could not venture even to hint at his wishes in the matter. There was nothing for it but to wait patiently till she should feel in the humour to tell him what he wanted to know. He was in no particular hurry to take the journey to Pembridge, and a few days more or less in London were of no consequence to him. She had promised to tell him all about Eleanor, and he felt sure that she would not break her promise. In so thinking Gerald was quite right, but it was not until the evening of the fourth day after his arrival in London that Miss Bellamy recurred to the subject in any way.

"I will tell you to-morrow," she said to him that evening, as he shook hands with her at parting. "And then you must get down to Pembridge as quickly as you can. You have lingered in London quite long enough."

Miss Bellamy was a believer in suppers. In fact, she still stuck to the old-fashioned hours for meals, to which she had been accustomed when a girl at home: dinner at half-past one, tea at six, and supper at ten. In such a case supper is generally the pleasantest and most sociable meal of all; people then seem more inclined for talking than at any other time, and subjects that one hardly cares to mention during the day seem to assimilate themselves quite naturally to the time and place, and come to be discussed without much difficulty.

Supper was over, and the cloth removed. The night being cold,

Miss Bellamy had drawn her easy chair up close to the fire, and now sat resting her chin in the palm of one hand, and gazing silently into the glowing embers. Gerald, prepared to listen to a sad story, had thrown himself into an easy chair opposite Miss Bellamy on the other side the fire. At length Miss Bellamy roused herself with a sigh, and turned on Gerald a face that seemed suddenly to have grown five years older.

"Twenty years ago, this very month," she said, "a terrible murder was committed. All murders are terrible in a greater or a lesser degree, but this one was terrible, not merely from the crime itself, but from the after consequences that arose out of it. The name of the murdered man was Paul Stilling; the place where he was murdered was the Pelican Hotel, Tewkesbury; and the name of the man who was accused of the crime was Ambrose Murray."

Gerald started.

"Stilling was a young man, the junior partner in a firm of Birmingham jewellers. At the time he met with his death he had property on him of the value of four thousand pounds. It was for the sake of this property that he was murdered. He was found dead in his bed, stabbed to the heart. In the portmanteau of Ambrose Murray, who was stopping that night in the same hotel, was found a bracelet of the value of six hundred pounds, which had belonged to Stilling. No other portion of the property has, to my knowledge, ever been found from that day to this.

"Ambrose Murray was arrested, committed for wilful murder, subsequently tried, and condemned to death in due form," went on Miss Bellamy. "Before, however, the time had come for carrying out the last dread sentence of the law, symptoms of undoubted insanity manifested themselves in the condemned man, and his sentence had to be commuted into imprisonment for life."

Gerald sat lost in wonder.

"So far, I daresay, you see nothing uncommon in my story—nothing that has any particular interest for you. But when I tell you that Ambrose Murray's wife was my intimate friend, as well as being the intimate friend of your mother and your aunt—when I tell you that Ambrose Murray's wife died heartbroken within twelve months of the time her husband was taken from her; when I tell you that the child adopted by your uncle and aunt was none other than the child of a man condemned to death for murder, and that Eleanor Lloyd is in reality Eleanor Murray—when I tell you all this, you cannot say that my story has no interest for you, you cannot say that I have claimed your attention without sufficient warrant for so doing!"

"What a strange chapter of family history you have opened for me," exclaimed Gerald. "What you told me the other night seemed to me sufficiently wonderful, but this is stranger than all. Poor Eleanor

poor girl!" he added after a long while. "Although I have never seen her, I have always felt that when we did meet I should come to regard her as a sister; and now you tell me that I cannot even claim her as a cousin."

Miss Bellamy said nothing. She was gazing into the fire again, but with thoughts that were far away. She was roused at last by a direct question from Gerald.

"How much of the story you have just told me will be known to this Mr. Kelvin, when he comes to open the sealed packet which you sent him by my uncle's instructions?"

"He will know that Eleanor is no relation of your uncle, and that is the news which he will have to break to her. Inside his own packet is a second packet, sealed up and directed to Eleanor, and to be opened by her alone. This packet will tell her everything."

"What a shock for a girl like her!"

"You are right, Gerald; it will be a terrible shock. I cannot tell you how grateful I am that I have been spared the pain of enlightening her."

"About her father? Did you believe him to be guilty or innocent?"

"I would stake my life on Ambrose Murray's innocence. No one who ever knew him would for a single moment believe in his guilt. He was one of the gentlest-hearted men I ever met. There was something almost feminine about him. His was indeed a most lovable disposition."

"What was he by profession?"

"A doctor. He had been staying at Malvern for the benefit of his health—he was always delicate—and was walking home by easy stages. He had got as far as Tewkesbury, and happened to be stopping there on that one particular night when Paul Stilling was murdered."

"Is he still alive?"

"He is. I saw him only a few months ago. In fact, I have been in the habit of visiting him at intervals ever since his wife's death. For many years he did not know me. But gradually—imperceptibly almost—his reason has come back to him, and he is now, and has been for the last five years, as sane as either you or I."

"Is there no prospect of his ever being released?"

"None whatever, I'm afraid. You see, the crime—assuming him for the moment to have been guilty of it—was committed before his insanity declared itself. It is not as though he had been a lunatic at the time of the murder."

"What a terrible fate! Does he know that his daughter is alive?"

"He knows everything. It is at his own wish that Eleanor has been kept in ignorance of her real parentage for so long a time; and, had Jacob Lloyd lived, the secret would not have been told her even now."

"But how did it happen that none of the gossips of Pembridge found out that Eleanor was not my uncle's child?"

"It was not till about a year after their adoption of the child that your uncle, aunt, and Eleanor made their first appearance at Pembridge, your uncle having just bought Bridgeley, where he lived till he died. They had come from a town two hundred miles away, and did not know a soul in the place."

"Has no rumour of the truth ever crept out?"

"Never, I am certain."

"And Eleanor herself has never had any suspicion?"

"Not the slightest, so far as I know. How should she? She was but eleven months old when her mother died: far too young to have the faintest recollection of anything that happened."

At this moment, they both heard a knock at the front door, but without paying any heed to it. Miss Bellamy was never troubled with late visitors. There were other lodgers in the house, and the knock could come from no one in search of her.

But presently came the sound of footsteps on the stairs, followed by Eliza's timid tap at the room door. "Come in," said Miss Bellamy, a little more sharply than usual. She felt annoyed that her tête-à-tête with Gerald should be thus interrupted.

The door opened, and Eliza's head was intruded. "A gentleman to see you, ma'am. He won't give no name."

"A gentleman to see me!" said Miss Bellamy, as she started up in surprise. She felt slightly scandalised to think that any gentleman should be so indiscreet as to call upon her at such an hour as eleven o'clock p.m.

But by this time the gentleman, who followed the girl upstairs, had pushed himself into the room; and Eliza, a little frightened at his audacity, slunk timidly out and shut the door quickly behind her.

"May I ask, sir——" began Miss Bellamy frigidly, and then something in the stranger's face suddenly froze her into silence.

And yet not much of his face was to be seen, all the lower part of it being hidden in the folds of a large plaid, and the upper part shaded by the broad brim of a soft felt-hat, from under which looked forth two dark melancholy eyes of singular beauty. Miss Bellamy's hands began to tremble, and she leaned against the table for support.

The stranger did not speak; but, swiftly unrolling his plaid, let it half drop to the ground and took off his hat. Miss Bellamy's face grew as white as death. She started forward; and then she shrank back, all a-tremble. Gerald Warburton's eyes turned from the stranger to her and then went back to the man: a tall, thin, frail-looking figure, with a long white beard and white hair that fell over the collar of his coat.

"Sir—you—you—you are either Ambrose Murray, or his ghost!"

slowly gasped Miss Bellamy. "In Heaven's name, what has brought you here?"

"I have escaped!" exclaimed the man in a low, hoarse voice. "Escaped at last!"

He clasped his hands suddenly above his head, gave utterance to a short, sharp, hysterical laugh, staggered forward a few steps, and would have fallen to the ground had not Gerald Warburton caught him in his arms.

(*To be continued*)

A BRIDE SONG.

THRO' the vales to my love!
To the happy small nest of home,
Green from basement to roof,
Where the honey-bees come
To the window-sill flowers,
And dive from above,
Safe from the spider that weaves
Her warp and her woof
In some outermost leaves.

Thro' the vales to my love!
In sweet April hours
All rainbows and showers,
While dove answers dove,—
In beautiful May,
When the orchards are tender,
And frothing with flowers,—
In opulent June,
When the wheat stands up slender
By sweet-smelling hay,
And half the sun's splendour
Descends to the moon.

Thro' the vales to my love!
Where the turf is so soft to the feet,
And the thyme makes it sweet,
And the stately foxglove
Hangs silent its exquisite bells;
And where water wells
The greenness grows greener,
And bulrushes stand
Round a lily to screen her.

Nevertheless, if this land,
Like a garden to smell and to sight,
Were turned to a desert of sand;
Stripped bare of delight,
All its best gone to worst,
For my feet no repose,
No water to comfort my thirst,
And heaven like a furnace above,—
The desert would be
As gushing of waters to me,
The wilderness be as a rose,
If it led me to thee, O my love.

CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI.

CHARLES VAN RHEYN.

I SHALL always say it was a singular thing that I should chance to go back to school that time the day before the quarter opened. Singular, because I heard and saw more of the boy I am going to tell of than I otherwise might have heard and seen. I was present at his arrival; and I was present at his—well, let us say, at his departure.

Dr. Frost was puzzling over a letter from France. Turning its pages over and back again, and staring at it through his spectacles, he at last brought it to me.

"You are a pretty good French scholar, Johnny; can you read this? I can't, I confess. But the paper's so thin, and the ink so pale, and the writing so small, I could scarcely see it if it were English."

As he said, the ink was pale, and it was a frightfully small and cramped handwriting. The letter was dated Rouen, and was signed curtly, "Van Rheyn," French fashion, without the writer's Christian name. Monsieur Van Rheyn wrote to say, that he was about to consign his son, Charles Aberleigh Van Rheyn, to Dr. Frost's care, and that he would arrive quickly after the letter, having already departed on his journey under the charge of a "gentilhomme Anglais." It added that the son would bring credentials with him; that he spoke some English, and was partly of English descent, through his mother the late Madame Van Rheyn, *née* Aberleigh.

"Rather a summary way of consigning a pupil to my charge," remarked Dr. Frost. "Aberleigh?—Aberleigh? She must have been one of the Aberleighs of Upton. Perhaps Hall knows?"

"There's none of the Aberleighs left now to know, sir," said Hall, when questioned. "There never was but two—after the old mother died: Miss Aberleigh and Miss Emma Aberleigh. Good fortunes the young ladies had, sir, and both of them, I remember, married on the same day. Miss Aberleigh to Captain Scott, and Miss Emma to a French gentleman, Mosseer Von Rheyn."

"I should think, by the name, he was Dutch—or Flemish; not French," remarked the Doctor.

"Anyway, sir, he was said to be French," remarked Hall. "A dark, sallow gentleman who wore a braided coat. The young ladies never came back to their home after the wedding day, and the place was sold. Captain Scott sailed with his wife for Injia, and Mosseer Von Rheyn took Miss Emma off to his house in France. Not long ago, I heard it said that poor Miss Emma was dead—Mrs. Von Rheyn, this is. A nice quiet girl, she was."

"Then I conclude the new pupil, advised to me, must be the son of Mr. Van Rheyn and Miss Emma Aberleigh," remarked the Doctor. "You must help to make things pleasant for him, Johnny: it will be a change at first from his own home and country. Do you remember that other French boy we had here?"

I did. And the remembrance made me laugh. He used to lament every day that he had not a plate of soup to dine off, and say the meat was tough.

Strolling out at the front gates in the course of the morning, I caught sight of the first boy. He was walking up from the Plough and Harrow Inn, with a large trunk behind him. And of all queer figures that boy looked the queerest. His trousers and vest were nankeen, his coat was a kind of open blouse, and flew out behind him like a big round tail; the hat he wore was a great big tall chimney-pot with a wide brim. Off went the hat, with a bow and a flourish of the arm, as he reached me and the gates.

"I ask your pardon, sir. This is, I believe, the pension of Mister the Doctor Frost?"

The French accent, the French manners, the French turn of the words told me who it was. For a minute or two I really could not answer for staring at him. He seemed to have arrived with a shaved head, as if just out of jail, or of brain fever. Really and truly it was the most remarkable figure ever seen out of a picture. I could not guess his age exactly: something perhaps between twelve and fourteen. He was slender and upright, and to all appearance strong.

"I think you must be Charles Van Rheyn," I said then, holding out my hand to welcome him. "Dr. Frost is expecting you."

As he put his hand into mine, such a glad brightness came into his rather large and honest grey eyes, that I liked him from that hour, in spite of the clothes and the freckled face and the shorn head. He had crossed from Folkestone by the night boat, and the gentleman, who was his escort to London, had there put him into the proper train to come on to his destination.

Dr. Frost was at the window, and came to the door. Van Rheyn stood still when within a yard of him, took his hat off with the most respectful air, and bowed his head down to the ground. He had evidently been brought up with a reverence for pastors and masters. The Doctor shook hands: and Van Rheyn gave him a large, square letter sealed with two flaming red seals and a coat of arms. It contained a draft for a good sum of money in advance of the first three months' payment, and some pages of closely-written matter in the crabbed hand of Monsieur Van Rheyn.

"Are you a Protestant or a Roman Catholic?" questioned Dr. Frost.

"I am Protestant, sir: the same that my mother was. We attended the Eglise of Monsieur le Pastor Mons, of the Culte Evangélique."

"This young gentleman is the son of the Miss Emma Aberleigh you once knew, Hall," spake the Doctor to her, with a view no doubt to put her on good terms with the new pupil.

"Yes, sir," she answered. "He favours his mamma about the eyes."

"She must have had very nice eyes," I put in.

"And so she had," said Van Rheyn, looking at me gratefully. "Thank you for saying it. I wish you could have known her!"

"And might I ask, sir, what has become of the other Miss Aberleigh?" asked Hall of Van Rheyn. "The young lady who went off to Injia with her husband on the wedding-day."

"You would say my Aunt Margaret? She is well. She and the Major and the children will make the voyage to Europe next year."

Van Rheyn said he should like to unpack his box, and we went upstairs together. Growing confidential over the unpacking, he gave me scraps of information touching his home and family, the mention of one item leading to another.

His baptismal name in full, he said, was Charles Jean Aberleigh; his father's was Jean Marie. Their home was a très joli château close to Rouen: in five minutes you could walk thither. It was all much changed since his mother died (he seemed to have loved her with a fervent love and to revere her memory); the last thing he did on coming away for England was to take some flowers to her grave. It was thought in Rouen that his father was going to make a second marriage with one of the Demoiselles de Tocqueville, whom his Aunt Claribelle did not like. His Aunt Claribelle, his father's sister, had come to live at the château when his mother died; but if that Thérèsine de Tocqueville came into the house she would quit it. The Demoiselles de Tocqueville had hardly any *dot*,—which would be much against the marriage, Aunt Claribelle thought, and bad for his father; because when he (Charles) should be the age of twenty-one, all the money came to him; it had been his mother's and was so settled; and his father's property was but very small. Of course he should wish his father to keep always as much as he pleased, but Aunt Claribelle said the English trustees would be sure not to allow that. His mother had wished him to finish his education in England and to go to one of the two colleges to which English gentlemen went.

"Halloa, here comes old Fontaine!" I interrupted at this juncture, happening to see him from the window. Van Rheyn looked up from his shirts, which he was counting. He seemed to have the tidiest ways in the world. "You can talk away with him in your native tongue as much as you will, Van Rheyn."

"But I have come here to speak the English tongue, not the French," debated he, looking at me seriously. "My father wishes me to speak and read it without any strange accent; and I wish it also."

"You speak it very well already."

"But you can tell that it is not my native tongue—that I am a foreigner."

"Of course. What are you to be, Van Rheyn?"

"I need not be any thing: I have enough fortune to be a rentier—I don't know what you call that in English; it means a gentleman who lives on his money. But I wish, myself, to be an English priest."

"An English priest! Do you mean a parson?"

"Yes, I mean that. So you see I must learn the English tongue perfectly. My mother used to talk to me about the priests in her own land ——"

"Parsons, Van Rheyn."

"I beg your pardon: I forget. And I fear I have much caught up the French names for things since my mother died. It was neither priest nor parson she used to call the English ministers."

"Clergymen, perhaps?"

"That was it. She said the clergymen were all good men, and she should like me to be one clergyman. In winter, when it was cold and she had some fire in her chamber, I used to sit up there with her, after coming home from classe, and we talked together, our two selves. I should have much money, she said, when I grew to be a man, and could lead an idle life. But she would not like that: she wanted me to be a good man, and to go to Heaven when I died, where she would be; and she thought if I were a clergyman I should have serious thoughts always. So I wish to be one clergyman."

He said all this with the greatest simplicity and composure, just as he might have spoken of going for a ride. Indeed, he seemed to be of a thoroughly simple, straightforward nature.

"It might involve your living over here, Van Rheyn: once you were in Orders."

"Yes, I know. Papa would not mind. England was mamma's country, and she loved it. There was more peace in England than in France, she thought."

"I say, she must have been a good mother, Van Rheyn."

In a moment his grey eyes were shining at me through a mist of tears. "Oh, she was so good, so good! You can never know. If she had lived I should never have had sorrow."

"What did she die of?"

"Ah, I cannot tell. She was well in the morning, and she was dead at night. Not that she was strong ever. It was one Dimanche. We had been to the Office, she and I——"

"What office?"

"Oh pardon—I forget I am speaking English. I mean to church. Monsieur Mons had preached; and we were walking along the street towards home afterwards, mamma talking to me about the sermon, which had been a very holy one, when we met the Aunt Claribelle

who had come into the town for high mass at St. Ouen. Mamma asked her to come home and dine with us; and she said yes, but she must first go to say bon-jour to old Madame Soubitez. As she parted with us, there was suddenly a great outcry. It was fête at Rouen that Sunday. Some bands of music were to play on the estrade in the public garden, competing for a prize, consequently the streets were crowded. We looked back at the noise, and saw many horses, without riders, galloping along towards us; men, running after them, shouting and calling; and the people, mad with fright, tumbling over one another in effort to get away. Later we heard that these horses, frightened by something, had broken out of an hotel post-yard. Well, mamma gave just a cry of fear and held my hand tighter as we set off to run with the rest, the horses stamping wildly after us. But the people pushed between us, and I lost her. She was at home before me, and was sitting on the side of the fountain, inside the château entrance-gate, her face all white and blue, as she clung to the nearest lion with both hands. I had never seen her look so. Come in, mamma, I said, and take a little glass of cordial: but she could not answer me, and did not stir. I called one of the servants, and by-and-by she got a little breath again, and went into the house leaning upon both of us, and so up to her chamber. Quite immediately papa came home: he always went in town to his club on the Sunday mornings, and he ran for Monsieur Petit, the médecin—the doctor. By seven o'clock in the evening, mamma was dead."

"Oh dear! What was the cause?"

"Papa did not tell me. He and Monsieur Petit talked about the heart. They said it was feeble. Oh, how we cried, papa and I! He cried for many days. I hope he will not bring home Thérèsine de Tocqueville!"

The dinner-bell rang out, and we went down. Dr. Frost was putting up the letter, which old Fontaine had been translating to him. It was full of directions about Van Rheyn's health. What he was to do, and what not to do. Monsieur Van Rheyn said his son was not strong: he was not to be allowed to do the gymnastics, or the "boxing," or to play at rough games, or take violent exercise of any kind; and a small glass of milk was to be given him at night when he went to bed. If the clothes sent over with him were not suitable to the school, or in accordance with the English mode, Dr. Frost was prayed to be at the trouble of procuring him new ones. He was to be brought well on in all the studies necessary to constitute the "gentilhomme," and especially in the speaking and reading of English.

Dr. Frost directed his spectacles to Charles Van Rheyn, examining him from top to toe. The round, red, freckled face, and the strongly-built frame appeared to give nothing but indications of robust health. The Doctor questioned him in what way he was not strong—whether he

was subject to a cough, or to want of appetite, and other such items. But Van Rheyn seemed to know nothing about it, and said he had always been quite well.

"The father fears we should make him into a muscular Englishman, hence these restrictions," thought Dr. Frost.

In the afternoon, the fellows began to come in thick and threefold. To describe their amazement when they saw Van Rheyn is quite beyond me. It seemed that they never meant to leave off staring. Some of them gave him a little chaff, even that first night. Van Rheyn was very shy and silent. Though entirely at his ease with me alone, the numbers seemed to daunt him; to strike him and his courage into himself.

On the whole, Van Rheyn was not liked. Once let a school set itself against a new fellow at first—and Van Rheyn's queer appearance had done that much for him—it takes a long while to bring matters round—if they ever are brought round. When his hair began to sprout, it looked exactly like pig's bristles. And that was the first nickname he got: Bristles. The Doctor had soon changed his style of coat, and he wore jackets, as we did.

Charles Van Rheyn did not seem inclined to grow sociable. Shy and silent as he had shown himself to them that first evening, so he remained. True, he got no encouragement to be otherwise. The boys threw ridicule on him continually, making him into an almost perpetual butt. Any mistake in the pronunciation of an English word—Van Rheyn never made a mistake as to its *meaning*—they hissed and groaned and shouted at. I shall never forget one. Being asked when that Indian lot intended to arrive (meaning the Scotts), and whether they would make the voyage in a palanquin (for the boys plied him with ridiculous questions purposely), he answered Not in a palanquin, but in a sheep—meaning ship. The uproar at that was so vast, that some of the masters looked in to know what was up.

Van Rheyn, too, was next door to helpless. He did not climb, or kick, or even run. Had never been used to do it, he said. What *had* he been used to do then, he was asked, one day. Oh, he had sat out in the garden with his mother; and since her death, with Aunt Claribelle; and gone for an airing in the carriage three times a week. Was he a girl? roared the boys. Did he sew patchwork? Not now; he had left off sewing when he was nine, answered Van Rheyn innocently, unconscious of the storm of mockery the avowal would invoke. "Pray, were you born a young lady?—or did they change you at nurse?" shouted Jessup, who would have kept the ball rolling till midnight. "I say, you fellows, he has come to the wrong school: we don't take in girls, we don't. Let me introduce one to you—Miss Charlotte."

And, so poor Charley Van Rheyn got that nickname as well as the other: Miss Charlotte.

Latin was a stumbling-block. Van Rheyn had learnt it according to French rules and French pronunciation, and he could not readily get into our English mode. "It was bad enough to have to teach a stupid boy Latin," grumbled the under Latin master (under Dr. Frost), "but worse to have to un-teach him." Van Rheyn was not stupid, however; if he seemed so, it was because his new life was so strange to him.

One day the boys dared him to a game at leap-frog. Some of them were at it in the yard, and Van Rheyn stood by, looking on. "Why don't you go in for it?" suddenly asked Parker, giving him a push. "There is to be a round or two at boxing this evening, why don't you go in for *that?*" "They never would let me do these rough things," replied Van Rheyn, who invariably answered all the chaffing civilly and patiently. "Who wouldn't? Who's they?" "My mother and my Aunt Claribelle. Also, when I was starting to come here, my father said to me I was not to exert myself." "All right, Miss Charlotte; but why on earth did not the respectable old gentleman send you over in petticoats? Never was such a thing heard of, you know, as for a girl to wear a coat and pantaloons. It's not decent, Miss Charlotte; it's not modest." "Why you say all this to me for ever? I am not a girl," said poor Van Rheyn. "No? don't tell fibs. If you were not a girl you'd go in for our games. Come! Leap-frog's especially edifying, I assure you: expands the mind. Won't you try it?"

Well, the upshot was, that they dared him to try it. A dozen, or so, set on at him like so many wolves. What with that, and what with their stinging ridicule, poor Van Rheyn was goaded out of his obedience to home orders, and did try it. After a few tumbles, he went over very tolerably, and did not dislike it at all.

"If I can only learn to do as the rest of you do, perhaps they will let me alone," he said to me that same night, a kind of hopeful eagerness in his bright grey eyes.

And gradually he did learn to go in for most of the games: running, leaping, and climbing. One thing he absolutely refused—wrestling. "Why should gentlemen, who were to be gentlemen all their lives, fight each other?" he asked; "they would not have to fight as men; it was not kind; it was unpleasant; it was hard." The boys were hard on him for saying it, mocking him frightfully: but they could not shake him there. He was of right blue blood; never caving-in before them, as Bill Whitney expressed it one day; he only was quiet, and endured.

Whether the native Rouen air is favourable to freckles, I don't know; but those on Van Rheyn's face gradually disappeared over here. The complexion lost its redness also, becoming fresh and fair, with a brightish colour on the cheeks. The hair, getting longer, turned out to be of a smooth brown: altogether he was good-looking.

"I say, Johnny, do you know Van Rheyn's ill?"

The words came from William Whitney. He whispered them in my ear as we stood up for prayers before breakfast. The school had opened about a month then.

"What's the matter with him?"

"Don't know," answered Bill. "He is staying in bed."

Cribbing some minutes from breakfast, I went up to his room. Van Rheyn looked pale as he lay, and said he had been sick. Hall declared it was nothing but a sick headache, and Van Rheyn thought she might be right.

"Yes, the migraine," he assented. "I have had it before."

"Well, look here, Charley," I said, after thinking a minute; "if I were you I'd not say as much to any of them. Let them suppose you are regularly ill. You'll never hear the last of it if they know you lie in bed for only a headache."

"But I cannot get up," he answered: "my head is in much pain. And I have the fever. Feel my hand."

The hand he put out was burning hot. But that went with sick headaches sometimes.

It turned out to be nothing worse, for he was well on the morrow; and I need not have mentioned it at all, but for a little matter that arose out of the day's illness. Going up again to see him after school in the afternoon, I found Hall standing over the bed with a cup of tea, and a most severe, not to say horror-struck, expression of countenance, as she gazed down on him, staring at something with all her eyes. Van Rheyn was asleep, and looked better; his face flushed and moist, his brown hair, still uncommonly short, compared with ours, pushed back. He lay with his hands outside the bed, as if the clothes were heavy—the weather was fiery hot—and one of them was clasping something that hung round his neck by a narrow blue ribbon, and seemed to have been pulled by him out of the opening in his night-shirt. Hall's quick eyes had detected what it was—a very small cross (hardly two inches long), on which was carved a figure of the Saviour, all in gold.

Now Hall had doubtless many virtues.—One of them was docking us boys of our due allowance of sugar.—But she had also many prejudices. And of all her prejudices none was stronger than her abhorrence of idols, as exemplified in carved images and Chinese gods.

"Do you see that, Master Ludlow?" she whispered to me, pointing her finger straight at the little cross of gold. "It's no better than a relict of paganism."

Stooping down, she gently drew the cross out of Van Rheyn's hot, clasped hand, and let it lie on the sheet. A beautiful little cross it was; the face of the Saviour; an exquisite face in its expression of suffering and patient humility; one that you might have gazed upon and

been the better for. How they could have so perfectly carved a thing so small, I did not know.

"He must be one of them worshipping Romanics," said Hall, snatching her fingers from the cross as if she thought it would give her the ague. "Or else a pagan! And he goes every week and says his commandments in class, a-standing up afore all the school! I wonder what the Doctor——"

Hall cut short her complaints. Van Rheyn had suddenly opened his eyes and was looking up at us.

"I find myself better," he said with a smile. "The pain has mostly departed."

"We wasn't thinking of pain and headaches, Master Van Rheyn, but of *this*," said Hall resentfully, taking the spoon out of the saucer and pointing it to the gold cross. Van Rheyn raised his head from the pillow to look.

"Oh, it is my little cross," he said, holding it out to our view as far as the ribbon allowed, and speaking with perfect ease and unconcern. "Is it not beautiful?"

"Very," I said, stooping over it.

"Be you of the Romanic sex?" demanded Hall of Van Rheyn.

"Am I—— What is it Mistress Hall would ask?" he broke off to question me, in the midst of my burst of laughter.

"She asks if you are a Roman Catholic, Van Rheyn."

"But no. Why you think that?" he added to her. "My father is Roman Catholic: I am Protestant, like my mother."

"Then why on earth, sir, do you wear such a idol as that?" returned Hall.

"This? Oh, it is nothing: it is not an idol. It does me good."

"Good!" fiercely repeated Hall. "Does you good to wear a brazen image next the skin!——right under the flannel waistcoat. I wonder what the school will come to next!"

"Why should I not wear it?" said Van Rheyn "What harm does it do me, this? It was my poor Aunt Annette's. The last time we went to the Aunt Claribelle's to see her, when the hope of her was gone, she put the cross into my hand, and bade me keep it for her sake."

"I tell you, Master Van Rheyn, it's just a brazen image," persisted Hall.

"It is a keepsake," dissented Van Rheyn. "I showed it to Monsieur Mons one day when he was calling on mamma, and told him it was the gift to me of the poor Tante Annette. M. Mons thought it very pretty, and said it would remind me of the great Sacrifice."

"But to wear it again' your skin!" went on Hall, not giving in. Giving in on the matter of graven images was not in her nature. Or on any matter, as far as that went, that concerned us boys. "I've heard of poor misdeluded people putting horse-hair next 'em. And fine torment it must be!"

"I have worn it since mamma died," quietly answered Van Rheyn who seemed not to understand Hall's zeal. "She kept it for me always in her little shell-box that had the silver crest on it; but when she died, I said I would put the cross round my neck, for fear of losing it: and Aunt Claribelle, who took the shell-box then, bought me the blue ribbon."

"Well, it's a horrid heathenish thing to do, Master Van Rheyn, and I don't believe Miss Emma Aberleigh would ever have give countenance to it. Leastways afore she lived amid them foreign Frenchfolks," added Hall, virtually dropping the contest, as Van Rheyn slipped the cross out of view within his night-shirt. "What she might have come to, after she went off there, Heaven alone knows. Be you a-going to drink this tea, sir, or be you not?"

Van Rheyn drank the tea and thanked her gratefully for bringing it, the gratitude shining as well out of his nice grey eyes. Hall took back the cup and tucked him up again, telling him to get a bit more sleep and he would be all right in the morning. With all her prejudices and sourness, she was as good as gold when any of us were ill.

"Not bathe! Not bathe! I say, you fellows, here's a lark! Bristles thinks he'd better not try the water!"

It was a terribly hot evening, close upon sunset. Finding ourselves, some half-dozen of us, near the river, Van Rheyn being one, the water looked too pleasant not to be plunged into. The rule at Dr. Frost's was that no boy should be compelled to bathe against his inclination. Van Rheyn was the only one who had availed himself of the exception. It was Parker who spoke: we were all undressing quickly.

"What's your objection, Miss Charlotte? Girls bathe."

"They never let me go into cold water at home," was the patient answer. "We take warm baths there."

"Afraid of cold water! well, I never! What an everlasting big pussy-cat you are, Miss Charlotte! I've heard before that pussies don't like to wet their feet."

"Our doctor at Rouen used to say I must not plunge into cold water," said poor Van Rheyn, nearly driven wild. "The shock would not be good for me."

"I say, who'll write off to Evesham for a pair of water-proofs to put over his shoes? Just give us the measure of your foot, Miss Charlotte."

"Oh bother! Shut him up in a feather bed!"

"Why, the water's not cold, you donkey!" cried out Bill Whitney, who had just leaped in. "It's as warm as new milk. What on earth will you be fit for, Bristles? You'll never make a man."

"Make a man! What are you thinking of, Whitney? Miss Charlotte has no ambition that way. Girls prefer to grow up into young ladies, not into men."

"Is it truly warm?" asked Van Rheyn, looking at the river irresolutely, and thinking that if he went in the mockery might cease.

I looked up at him from the water. "It is indeed, Van Rheyn, Quite warm."

He knew he might trust me, and began slowly to undress. We had continued to be the best of comrades, and I never went in for teasing him as the rest did; rather shielded him when I could, and took his part.

By the time he was ready to go in—for he did nothing nimbly, and the undressing made no exception—some of us were ready to come out. One of Dr. Frost's rules in regard to bathing was stringent—that no boy should remain in the water more than three minutes at the very extent. He held that a great deal of harm was done by prolonged bathing. Van Rheyn plunged in—and liked it.

"It is warm and pleasant," he exclaimed. "This cannot hurt me."

"Hurt you, you great baby!" shouted Parker.

Van Rheyn had put his clothes in the tidiest manner upon the grass—not like ours, which were flung down any way; waistcoats here, stockings yonder. His things were laid smoothly one upon another, in the order he took them off—the jacket first, the flannel waistcoat uppermost. Though I daresay I should not have noticed this but for a shout from Jessup.

"Halloa! What's that?"

Those of us who were out, and in the several stages of drying or dressing, turned round at the words. Jessup, buttoning his braces, was standing by Van Rheyn's heap, looking down at it. On the top of the flannel singlet, lay the gold cross with the blue ribbon.

"What on earth *is* it?" cried Jessup, picking it up; and at the moment Van Rheyn, finding all the rest out of the water, came out himself. "Is it a charm?"

"It is mine—it is my gold cross," spoke Van Rheyn, catching up one of the wet towels to rub himself with. The bath this evening had been impromptu, and we had but two towels between us, that Parker and Whitney had brought. In point of fact, it had been against rules also, for we were not expected to go into the river without the presence of a master. But just at this bend it was perfectly safe. Jessup passed the blue ribbon round his neck, letting the cross hang behind. This done, he turned himself about for general inspection, and the boys crowded round to look.

"What do you say it is, Bristles?"

"My gold cross."

"You don't mean to tell us to our faces that you wear it?"

"I wear it always," freely answered Van Rheyn.

Jessup took it off his neck, and the boys passed it about from one to another. They did not ridicule the cross—I think the emblem on it prevented that—but they ridiculed Van Rheyn.

"A friend of mine went over to the tar-and-feather islands," said Millichip, executing an aggravating war dance round and about Charley. "He found the natives sporting no end of charms and amulets—nearly all the attire they did sport—rings in the nose and chains in the ears. What relation are those natives to you, Miss Charlotte?"

"Don't injure it, please," pleaded Van Rheyn.

"We've got an ancient nurse at home that carries the tip of a calf's tongue in her pocket for luck," shrieked out Thorne. "And I've heard—I *have* heard, Bristles—that any fellow who arms himself with a pen'orth of blue-stone from the druggist's, couldn't have the yellow jaundice if he tried. What might you wear this for, pray?"

"My Aunt Annette gave it me as a present when she was dying," answered poor helpless Charley; who had never the smallest notion of taking the chaff otherwise than seriously, or of giving chaff back again. He had dressed himself to his trousers and shirt, and stood with his hand stretched out, waiting for his cross.

"In the Worcester Journal, one day last June, I read an advertisement as big as a house, offering a child's caul for sale," cried Snepp. "Any gentleman or lady buying that caul and taking it to sea, could never be drowned. Bristles thinks as long as he wears this, he'll not come to be hanged."

"How's your grandmother, Miss Charlotte?"

"I wish you would please to let me alone," said he patiently. "My father would not have placed me here had he known."

"Why don't you write and tell him, Bristles?"

"I would not like to grieve him," simply answered Charley. "I can bear. And he does so much want me to learn the good English."

"This cross is gold," said Bill Whitney, who now had it. "I'd not advise you to fall amid thieves, Van Rheyn. They might ease you of it. The carving must be worth something."

"It cost a great deal to buy, I have heard my aunt say. Will you be so good as to give it me, that I may finish to dress myself?"

Whitney handed him the cross. Time was up, in fact; and we had to make a race for the house. Van Rheyn was catching it hot and sharp, all the way.

One might have thought that his very meekness, the non-resisting spirit in which he took things, would have disarmed the mockery. But it did not. Once go in wholesale for putting upon some particular fellow in a school, and the fun gains with use. I don't think any of them meant to be really unkind to Van Rheyn; but the play had begun, and they enjoyed it.

I once saw him in tears. It was at the dusk of evening. Charley had come in for it awfully at tea-time, I forget what about, and afterwards disappeared. An hour later, going into Whitney's room for something Bill asked me to fetch, I came upon Van Rheyn—who also

slept there. He was sitting at the foot of his low bed, his cheek leaning on one of his hands, and the tears running down swiftly. One might have thought his heart was broken.

"What is the grievance, Charley?"

"Do not say to them that you saw me," returned he, dashing away his tears. "I did not expect any of you would come up."

"Look here, old fellow. I know it's rather hard lines for you just now. But they don't mean anything: it is done in sport, not malice. They don't *think*, you see. You will be sure to live it down."

"Yes," he sighed, "I hope I shall. But it is so different here from what it used to be. I had the happiest home; I never had one sorrow when my mother was alive. Nobody cares for me now; nobody is kind to me: it is a great change."

"Take heart, Charley," I said, holding out my hand. "I know you will live it down in time."

Of all the fellows I ever met, I think he was the most grateful for a word of kindness. As he thanked me with a look of hope in his eyes, I saw that he had been holding the cross clasped in his palm; for it dropped as he put his hand into mine.

"It helps me to bear," he said, in a whisper. "My mother, who loved me so, is in Heaven; my father has married Mademoiselle Thérèsine de Tocqueville. I have no one now."

"Your father has not married that Thérèsine de Tocqueville!"

"But, yes. I had the letter just after dinner."

So perhaps he was crying for the home unhappiness as much as for his school grievances. It all reads strange, no doubt, and just the opposite of what might be expected of one of us English boys. The French bringing-up is different from ours: perhaps it lay in that. On the other hand, a French boy, generally speaking, possesses a very shallow sense of religion. But Van Rheyn had been reared by his English mother; and his disposition seemed to be naturally serious and uncommonly pliable and gentle. At any rate, whether it reads improbable or probable, it is the truth.

I got what I wanted for Bill Whitney, and went down, thinking what a hard life it was for him—what a shame that we made it so. Indulged, as Van Rheyn must have always been, as tenderly treated as a girl, sheltered from the world's roughness, all that coddling must have become to him as second nature; and the remembrance lay with him still. Over here, he was suddenly cut off from it, thrown into another atmosphere, isolated from country, home, home-ties, and associations; and compelled to stand the daily brunt of this petty tyranny.

Getting Tod apart that night, I put the matter to him: what a shame it was, and how sorry I felt for Charley Van Rheyn; and I asked him whether he thought he could not (he having a great deal of weight in the school) make things pleasanter for him. Tod responded that I

should never be anything but a muff, and that the roasting Van Rheyn got treated to was superlatively good for him, if ever he was to be made into a man.

However, before another week ran out, Dr. Frost interfered. How he got at the reigning politics we never knew. One Saturday afternoon, when old Fontaine had taken Van Rheyn out with him, the Doctor walked into the midst of us, to the general consternation.

Standing in the centre of the schoolroom, with a solemn face, all of us backing as much as possible, and those of the under-masters who chanced to be present rising also, the Doctor spoke of Van Rheyn. He had reason to suspect, he said, that we were doing our best to worry Van Rheyn's life out of him: and he put the question deliberately to us (and made us answer it), how we, if consigned alone to a foreign home, all its inmates strangers, would like to be served so. He did not wish, he went on, to think he had pitiful, ill-disposed boys, lacking hearts and common kindness, in his house: he felt sure that what had passed arose from a heedless love of mischief; and it would greatly oblige him to find from henceforth that our conduct to Van Rheyn changed: he thought and hoped that he had only to express a wish upon the point to insure obedience.

With that—and a hearty nod and smile around, as if he put it as a personal favour to himself, and wanted us to see that he did, and was not angry, he went out again. A counsel was held to determine whether we had a sneak among us—else how could Frost have known? But none could be pitched upon: every individual fellow, senior and junior, protested earnestly that he had not let out a syllable. And, to tell the truth, I don't think we had.

However, the Doctor was obeyed. From that day, all real annoyance to Charles Van Rheyn ceased. I don't say but what there would be a laugh at him now and then, or that he lost his names of Bristles and Miss Charlotte; but virtually the sting was gone. Charley was as grateful as could be, and seemed quite happy; and upon the arrival of a hamper by grande vitesse from Rouen, containing a huge rich wedding-cake and some packets of costly sweetmeats, he divided the whole amid us, keeping the merest taste for himself. The school made its comments in return.

"He's not a bad lot, after all, that Van Rheyn. He will make a man yet."

"It isn't a bit of use your going in for this, Van Rheyn, unless you can run like a lamplighter."

"But I can run, you know," responded Van Rheyn.

"Yes. But can you keep the pace up?"

"Why not?"

"We may be out for three or four hours, pelting like mad all the time."

"I feel no fear of keeping up," said Van Rheyn. "I will go."

"All right."

It was on a Saturday afternoon; and we were turning out for Hare and Hounds. The quarter was hard upon its close, for September was passing. Van Rheyn had never seen Hare and Hounds: it had been let alone during the hotter weather: and it was Tod who now warned him that he might not be able to keep up the running. It requires fleet legs and easy breath, as everybody knows; and Van Rheyn had never much exercised either.

"What is just the game?" he asked in his quaintly-turned phrase. And I answered him—for Tod had gone away.

"You see those torn strips of old copy-books that they are twisting? That is for the scent. The hare fills his pockets with it, and drops a piece of it every now and then as he runs. We, the hounds, follow his course by means of the scent, and catch him if we can."

"And then?" questioned Van Rheyn.

"Then the game is over."

"And what if you not catch him?"

"The hare wins; that's all. What he likes to do is to double upon us cunningly and lead us home again after him. We vault over the obstructions—gates, and stiles, and hedges, and that. Or, if the hedges are too high, scramble through them."

"But some hedges are very thick and close: nobody could get through them," debated Van Rheyn, taking the words, as usual, too literally.

"Then we are dished. And have to find some other way onwards.

"I can do what you say quite easily."

"All right, Charley," I repeated, as Tod had done. And neither of us had the smallest thought that it was not all right.

Millichip was chosen hare. Snepp turned cranky over something or other at the last moment, and backed out of it. He made the best hare in the school: but Millichip was nearly as fleet a runner.

What with making the scent, and having it out with Snepp, time was hindered; and it must have been getting on for four o'clock when we started. Which docked the run considerably, for we had to be in at six to tea. Letting the hare get on well ahead, the signal was given, and we started after him in full cry, rending the air with shouts and rushing along like the wind.

A right-down good hare, Millichips turned out to be; doubling and twisting and finessing, and exasperating the hounds considerably. About five o'clock he had made tracks for home, as we found by the scent; but we could neither see him nor catch him. Later, I chanced to come to grief in a treacherous ditch, lost my straw hat, and tore the sleeve of my jacket. This threw me behind the rest; and when I pelted up to the next stile, there stood Van Rheyn. He had halted to rest his

arms on it; his breath was coming in alarming gasps, his face whiter than any sheet.

"Halloa, Van Rheyn! What's up! The pace is too much for you."

"It was my breath," said he, when the gasps allowed him to answer. "I go on now."

I put my arm on him. "Look here: the run's nearly over; we shall soon be at home. Don't go on so fast."

"But I want to be in at what they call the death."

"There'll be no death to-day: the hare's safe to win."

"I want to keep up," he answered, getting over the stile. "I said I could keep up, and do what the rest did." And off he was again, full rush.

Before us, on that side of the stile, was a tolerably wide field. The pack had wound half over it during this short halt, making straight for the entrance to the coppice at the other end. We were doing our best to catch them up, when I distinctly saw a heavy stone flung into their midst. Looking at the direction it came from, there crept a dirty ragamuffin over the ground on his hands and knees. He did not see us two behind; and he flung another heavy stone. Had it struck anyone's head it would have done damage.

Letting the chase go, I stole across and pounced upon him before he could get away. He twisted himself out of my hands like an eel, and stood grinning defiance and whistling to his dog. We knew the young scamp well: but could never decide whether he was a whole scamp, or a half natural. At any rate, he was vilely bad, was the pest of the neighbourhood, and had enjoyed some short sojourns in prison for trespass. Raddy was the name he went by; we knew him by no other; and how he got a living nobody could tell.

"What did you throw those stones for?"

"Shan't tell ye. Didn't throw 'em at you."

"You had better mind what you are about, Mr. Raddy, unless you want to get into trouble."

"Yah—you!" grinned Raddy.

There was nothing to be made of him; there never was anything. I should have been no match for Raddy in an encounter; and he would have killed me without the slightest compunction. Turning to go on my way, I was in time to see Van Rheyn tumble over the stile and disappear within the coppice. The rest must have nearly shot out of its other end by that time. It was a coppice that belonged to Sir John Whitney. Once through it, we were on our own grounds, and within a field of home.

I went on leisurely enough: no good to try to catch them up now. Van Rheyn would not do it, and he had more than half a field's start of me. It must have been close upon six, for the sun was setting in a

ball of fire; the amber sky around it was nearly as dazzling as the sun, and lighted up the field.

So that, plunging into the coppice, it was like going into a dungeon. For a minute or two, with the reflection of that red light lingering in my eyes, I could hardly see the narrow path. The trees were dark, thick, and met overhead. I ran along whistling: wondering whether that young Raddy was after me with his ugly dog; wondering why Sir John did not ——

The whistling and the thoughts came to a summary close together. At the other end of the coppice, but a yard or two on this side the stile that divided it from the open field, there was Charles Van Rheyn on the ground, his back against the trunk of a tree, his arms stretched up clasping hold of it. But for that clasp, and the laboured breath, I might have thought he was dying. For his face was ghastly to look upon, blue all round the mouth, and had the strangest expression I ever saw.

"Charley, what's the matter?"

But he could not answer. He was panting frightfully, as though every gasp would be his last. What on earth was I to do? Down I knelt, saying never another word.

"It—gives—me—much—hurt," said he at length, with a long pause between every word.

"What does?"

"Here,"—pointing to his chest—towards the left side.

"Did you hurt yourself?—Did you fall?"

"No, I not hurt myself. I fall because not able to run more. It is the breath. I wish papa was near me!"

Instinct told me that he must have assistance—and yet I did not like to leave him. But what if delay in getting it should be dangerous? I rose up to go.

"You—you not going to quit me!" he cried out, putting his feeble grasp on my arm.

"But, Charley, I want to get somebody to you," I said in an agony. "I can't do anything for you myself: anything in the world."

"No, you stay. I should not like to be alone if I die."

The shock the word gave me I can recal yet. Die! If there was any fear of *that*, it was all the more necessary I should make a rush for Dr. Frost and Mr. Featherstone. Never had I been so near my wit's end before, from uncertainty as to what course I ought to take.

All in a moment, there arose a shrill whistle on the other side the stile. It was like a godsend. I knew it quite well for that vicious young reptile's, but it was welcome to me as sunshine in harvest.

"There's Raddy, Van Rheyn. I will send him."

Vaulting over the stile, I saw the young man standing with his back to me near the hedge, his wretched outer garment—sack without shape

—hitched up, his hands in the pockets of his dilapidated trousers, that hung in fringes below the knee. He was whistling to his dog in the coppice. They must have struck through the tangles and briars higher up, which was a feat of difficulty and strictly forbidden by law. It was well Sir John's agent did not see Mr. Raddy—whose legs, scratched and bleeding, gave ample proof of the trespass.

"Yah!—yah!" he shrieked out, turning at the sound of me, and grinning fresh defiance.

"Raddy," I said, speaking in a persuasive tone to propitiate him in my great need, "I want you to do something for me. Go to Dr. Frost as quickly as you are able, and say——"

Of all the derisive, horrible laughs, his interruption was the worst and loudest. It drowned the words.

"One of the school has fallen and hurt himself," I said, putting it that way. "He's lying here, and I cannot leave him. Hush, Raddy! I want to tell you,"—advancing a step or two nearer to him and lowering my voice to a whisper,—"I think he is dying."

"None o' yer gammon here; none o' yer lies"—and in proportion as I advanced, he retreated. "You've got a ambush in that there coppy—all the spicey lot on ye a-waiting to be down on me to serve me out! Just you try it on!"

"I am telling you the truth, Raddy. There's not a soul in there but the one boy I speak of. I say I fear he is dying. He is lying down helpless.—I will pay you to go:" feeling in my pockets to see how much I had there.

Raddy displayed his teeth: it was a trick of his when feeling particularly defiant. "What'll yer pay me?"

"Sixpence"—showing it to him. "I will give it you when you have taken the message."

"Give it first."

Just for a moment I hesitated in my extremity of need, but I knew it would be only the sixpence thrown away. Paid beforehand, Raddy would no more do the errand than he'd fly. I told him as much.

"Then, be dashed if I go!" And he passed off into a round of swearing.

Good heavens! if I should not be able to persuade him! If Charles Van Rheyn should die for lack of help!

"Did you ever have anybody to care for, Raddy? Did you ever have a mother?"

"Her's sent over the seas, her is; and I be glad on't. Her beated of me, her did: I warn't a-going to stand that."

"If you ever had anybody you cared for the least bit in the world, Raddy; if you ever did anybody a good turn in all your life, you will help this poor fellow now. Come and look at him. See whether I dare leave him."

"None o' yer swindles! Ye wants to get me in there, ye does. Yah! I warn't borned yesterday."

Well, it seemed hopeless. "Will you go for the sixpence if I give it you beforehand, Raddy?"

"Give it over, and see.——Where the thunder have ye been?" dealing his dog a savage kick, as it came up, barking. "Be I to whistle ye all day, d'ye think?" Another kick.

I had found two sixpences in my pocket; all its store. Bringing forth one, I held it out to him.

"Now listen, Raddy. I give you this sixpence now. You are to run with all your might to the house—and you can run, you know, like the wind. Say that I sent you—you know my name, Johnny Ludlow—sent you to tell them that the French boy is in the coppice dying:" for I thought it best to put it strong. "Dr. Frost, or some of them, must come to him at once, and they must send off for Mr. Featherston. You can remember that? The French boy, mind."

"I could remember it if I tried."

"Well, I'll give you the sixpence. And, look here—here's another sixpence. It is all the money I have. That shall be yours also, when you have done the errand."

I slipped one of the sixpences back into my pocket, holding out the other. But I have often wondered since that he did not stun me with a blow, and take the two. Perhaps he could not entirely divest himself of that idea of the "ambush." I did not like the leering look on his false face, as he sidled cautiously up towards the sixpence.

"Take a look at him; you can see him from the stile," I said, closing my hand over the sixpence while I spoke; "convince yourself that he is there, and that no trickery is meant. And, Raddy," I added, slowly opening the hand again: "perhaps you may want help one of these days yourself in some desperate need. Do this good turn for him, and the like will then be done for you."

I tossed him the sixpence. He stole cautiously to the stile, making a wide circuit round me to do it, glanced at Van Rheyn, and then made straight off in the right direction as fast as his legs would carry him, the dog barking at his heels.

Van Rheyn was better when I got back to him: his breathing easier, the mouth less blue; and his arms were no longer up, clutching the tree-trunk. Nevertheless, there was that in his face that gave me an awful fear and made my breath for a moment nearly as short as his. I sat down beside him, letting him lean against me, as well as the tree, for better support.

"Are you afraid, Charley? I hope they'll not be long."

"I am not afraid with this," he answered with a happy smile—and, opening his hand, I saw the little cross clasped in it.

Well, that nearly did for me. It was as though he meant to imply

he knew he was dying, and was not afraid to die. And he did mean it.

"You not comprehend?" he added, mistaking the look of my face—which no doubt was desperate. "I have kept the Saviour with me here, and he will keep me with him there."

"Oh——but Charley! You *can't* think you are going to die."

"Yes, I feel so," he said quite calmly. "My mother said, that last Sunday, I might not be long after her. She drew me close to her, and held my hand, and her tears were falling on mine. It was then she said it."

"Oh, Charley, how can I help you?" I cried out in my pain and dread. "If I could but do something for you!"

"I would like to give you this," he said, half opening his hand again, as it rested on his breast, just to show me the cross. "My mother has seen how good you have always been for me: she said she should look down, if permitted, to watch for me till I came. Would you please keep it to my memory?"

The hardest task I'd ever had in my life was to sit there. To sit there quietly—helpless. Dying! And I could do nothing to stay him! Oh, why did they not come! If I could but have run somewhere, or done something!

In a case like this the minutes seem as long as hours. Dr. Frost was up sooner than could have been hoped for by the watch, and Mr. Featherstone with him. Raddy did his errand well. Chancing to see the surgeon pass down the road as he was delivering the message at the house, he ran and arrested him. I saw his ill-looking face over the stile, as they came up, flung him the other sixpence, and thanked him too. The French master came running; others came: I hardly saw who they were, for my eyes were troubled.

The first thing that Featherstone did was to open Van Rheyn's things at the throat, spread a coat on the ground and put his head flat down upon it. But oh, there could be no mistake. He was dying: nearly gone. Dr. Frost knelt down, the better to get at him, and said something that we did not catch.

"Thank you, sir," answered Van Rheyn, panting again and speaking with pain, but smiling faintly his grateful smile. "Do not be sorrowful. I shall see my mother. Sir—if you please—I wish to give my cross to Johnny Ludlow."

Dr. Frost only nodded in answer. I daresay his heart was full.

"Johnny Ludlow has been always good for me," he went on, in his translated French. "He will guard it to my memory: the keepsake. My mother would give it to him—she has seen that Johnny stood by me ever since that first day."

Monsieur Fontaine spoke to him in French, and Van Rheyn answered in the same language. While giving a fond message for his

father, his voice grew feeble, his face more blue, and the lids slowly closed over his eyes. Dr. Frost said something about removing him to the house, but Featherstone shook his head. "Presently, presently."

"Adieu, sir," said Van Rheyn faintly to Dr. Frost, partly opening his eyes again. "Adieu, M. Fontaine. Adieu, all. Johnny, say my very best adieu to the boys; say to them it has been very pleasant lately; say they have been my very good comrades. Will you hold my hand?"

Taking his left hand in mine; the other had the gold cross in it; I sat on beside him. The dust was increasing so that we could no longer very well see his features in the dark coppice. My tears were dropping fast and thick, just as his tears had dropped that evening when I found him sitting at the foot of his bed.

Well, it was over directly. He gave one long deep sigh, and then another after an interval, and all was over. It seemed like a dream then in the acting; it seems, looking back, like a dream now.

He had died from the running at Hare and Hounds. The violent exercise had been too much for the heart. We heard later that the French family doctor had suspected the heart was not quite sound; and that was the reason of Monsieur Van Rheyn's written restrictions on the score of violent exercise. But, as Dr. Frost angrily observed, why did the father not distinctly warn him against that special danger: how was it to be suspected in a lad of hearty and healthy appearance? Monsieur Van Rheyn came over, and took what remained of Charles back to Rouen, to be laid beside his late wife. It was a great blow to him to lose his only son. And all the property went away from the Van Rheyn family to Mrs. Scott in India.

"I say, though," cried Parker, in a great access of remorse, speaking up amid the general consternation, when I gave them Charley's message that night, "we would never have worried him had we foreseen this. Poor Van Rheyn!"

And I have his gold cross by me to this day.

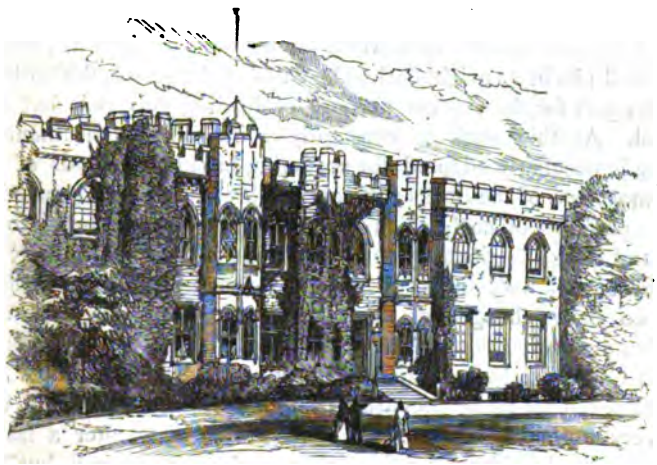
JOHNNY LUDLOW.

A WELSH RAMBLE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "A NIGHT IN A MONASTERY."

J. HAD lately gone down to Cardiff on a somewhat (to him) important occasion, and it had been agreed between us that if possible I should there join him for a week's holiday. Not that anything very delightful or attractive was to be looked for in Cardiff itself; but that was of no great moment. J. had received the command of a splendid ship, and his mission to the Welsh seaport was to join her.

The late skipper was still in command: not having the heart to



CARDIFF CASTLE.

resign control until the last moment. In a weak mood he had hastily made up his mind to retire from the service upon the urgent pleadings of his better-half, who thought it high time for him to settle down into a cozy old age, and a warm chimney corner. Like most men, he yielded to the soft womanly persuasion: but to an impartial observer it was plain to see that whilst the skipper with one eye watched the petticoats of the wife as they floated gracefully along the breezy streets of Cardiff, the other eye was twisted round the corner in amorous contemplation of a very different sailor, with a hankering gaze born of untimely repentance.

So until the very last moment the skipper did not mean to part company with the pride of his heart. It was not until that same last moment that he did so; when the good ship was being towed out of

dock and was passing through the locks. Then he stretched a long arm from the shore to the vessel, shook his successor by the hand with a vigorous grasp, and bade the whole craft and crew "good luck." Madam was on the opposite side the locks, patrolling to and fro like a sentinel; keeping guard over her husband, lest his weak heart and infirmity of purpose should treacherously give her the slip; and she should herself once more be as a widow, without the widow's privilege of seeking further consolation "if so dispoged." But this is anticipating.

Cardiff has a good deal to boast of in the matter of pedigree or antiquity. Its history may be traced back some time before the commencement of the Christian era: to a time when it was invaded by the Romans.

Cardiff Castle, of which we give two illustrations, is the seat of the Marquis of Bute, and is rich in historical associations. Amongst the saddest and most interesting may be noted the imprisonment of Robert, Duke of Normandy, eldest son of the Conqueror.

Cardiff, as all the intelligent world knows, owes much of its prosperity to the coal pits in its neighbourhood. Most of the vessels thither bound, enter its port for the express purpose of loading this rich but shady mineral. As this work is constantly going on; as the manner of loading is peculiarly adapted for scattering broadcast clouds of dust; the atmosphere of the docks; the air you breathe; is impregnated with infinite particles of coal, which get down your throat, and into your eyes, and cling affectionately to you, as flour to a miller. A daily warm bath becomes a necessity to all who hold cleanliness next to godliness; and two daily changes of linen are by no means an evidence of effeminate fastidiousness. The decencies of life are great institutions, and in Cardiff, to be kept up, they must be strictly attended to.

Cardiff, but for its neighbouring coal-mines and its shipping, would be a very unimportant place. As it is, it flourishes, after a fashion: the commercial fashion: a fashion that no doubt pays well, but leaves small scope for the imagination to indulge in romantic tendencies. In Cardiff the higher flights of a poetical fancy had need be restrained; the mind, if it wishes to retain a healthy balance, must take a practical view of things. The science of shipping may be studied there: the science of meteorology, such as the conjunction of winds and waves, the moon's influence upon tides, the rising of stormy skies. Human nature, that most interesting problem, may be studied also, but scarcely in its grandest types. The latter are generally found in senates and observatories; in quiet, closed-in studies, whence issue to the world books whose aphorisms burn into the heart and brain, or melodies that fill the spirit with thoughts and visions of a better sphere. If the grander types alluded to be of a sentimental turn, they will be found contemplating past ages with folded arms and rapt gaze in the Roman amphitheatre, or the ruins of Herculaneum; or writing odes to the

moon and the stars in the dead of night and the solitude of Italian lakes.

But poetical soarings and ambitious imaginations are as a rule not abundant in seaport towns, where few cargoes more romantic than coals are stowed away, and few men dream of anything more inspiring than the poetry of calculation.

Human nature was no better in Cardiff than in other seaport towns. Perhaps no worse. There was the same overwhelming number of beer-shops and gin-drinking establishments, with for the most part two streams of humanity attendant upon each; a stream ebbing and a stream flowing; a stream negative and a stream positive—very positive indeed. There was the usual trace of sin and depravity upon many of the faces; the same terrible language falling from many of the

CASTLE AND KEEP.

lips. From many a doorway, mingling with fumes of liquor, issued words that paled the cheek and froze the blood: and as the light, shooting forth its alluring beams, fell upon dishevelled hair and sin-stained faces, the eye met many a gaze from many a woman from which even a man with any modesty about him could only turn. Amongst the mingled crowd of men and women, the men nor looked nor seemed the worst.

Cardiff owes much of its prosperity, it has been already said, to its shipping and coal-mines. It boasts a tramway, a Turkish bath, a theatre, and other public institutions, including one or two excellent hotels. The shops are good; the shopkeepers universally and especially civil, obliging, and well spoken. But, whatever may be the strong points of the good people of Cardiff, accuracy in imparting information cannot be regarded as one of them, if we may judge by the following instance.

My excellent and eccentric friend, W. (spoken of in a former paper in connection with a journey to Bristol by the *Flying Dutchman*), was staying at present at Weston-super-Mare, killing time and recruiting health after his pastoral duties. Of course we wanted to get him over to Cardiff, and show him the ship and the lions of the place.

An excursion-boat was to run from Cardiff to Weston on the Wednesday morning, returning immediately to Cardiff, and going back to Weston in the afternoon. "A capital opportunity for W.," said I. "Affording a break in the monotony of our three existences."

"Well spoken," retorted J. "Though just now the good ship bears more the complexion if not the form of a coal barge than anything else."

But even this was not altogether a disadvantage, since it left great play for the imagination to work upon. So I telegraphed to W. "Come over on Wednesday afternoon, lunch with us, and go over J.'s ship."

"Too abrupt," said J. "Depend upon it he'll say No to that. He'll want further particulars as to lunch, or something of that sort. Can't you find some extra inducement to put in?"

A brilliant idea came up. I added: "You shall choose your own brand of champagne:" and looked anxiously at J. for approval.

"First-rate," said he, nodding. "Don't add anything to that inspiration. He'll come."

In a couple of hours' time, we received an answer: "Very happy to come on Wednesday. Veuve Clicquot." "My stars and g——" But perhaps I had better not give J.'s unrefined exclamation in extenso: sailors are not quite to be judged by ordinary rules, you know. He begged my pardon, and I would not have occasion to beg yours, dear reader. "Very happy indeed to see W.," continues J. "Delighted, I'm sure. But where the dev——" There I go again. It must be the spluttering of this ill-favoured pen that is noting down this strong language. "Where," corrected J., "by all that is recherché in the annals and vintages of wine, are we to alight on Veuve Clicquot in Cardiff?"

"We don't know all the resources of Cardiff," I returned, hopefully. "There is nothing like a woman for getting us into trouble or getting us out of it. Let us consult the landlady."

The landlady was equal to the occasion. Veuve Clicquot was unearthed eventually in triumph.

In an unlucky moment an idea struck us that it would be pleasant to run over to Weston in the steamer, for the sake of the blow, and the pleasure of escorting W. to Cardiff. A line was posted to him to that effect. "We will come over to meet you, and bring you back with us. The run across the Channel will be reviving after the relaxing (not to y coal-laden) air of Cardiff." At the boat-office they informed us

that the boat would start punctually at nine o'clock. Punctually at 8·45 on the Wednesday morning we were on the landing-stage. Punctually at 8·15 the boat had started; three quarters of an hour before the time specified. By this time she was almost at Weston. It is needless to record our state of mind. J. let off steam and made use of his tongue; so did I of mine. It brought back small consolation. All the office people could say was that the bills were not out, and the tide served earlier than they expected.

There was no help for it; the boat was gone and would be back at 10·15. W. would have to cross alone, and air his Latin by setting "Nunquam solus quam minus solus" to music. (He is very musical, and particularly partial to the Dead March in Saul.) We talked about the conspirators until 10·15, when the boat came in sight. At this moment a horrible suspicion took hold of me that W. would *not* cross alone. Sure enough the boat came in, the last man landed, and no W. appeared. "Just like him," I muttered. "And that mayonnaise and clicquot will be so much waste on the table. We who are not of a gustative turn of mind care nothing for such pampering food."

'Don't you believe it, and speak for yourself," said J., as contemptuously as he could, whilst his mouth watered. "Veuve Clicquot is an old friend of mine; and having been cut by one old friend, I don't mean to revenge myself on human nature by cutting another in return."

The next morning I received the following note:—

"DEAR W.,—The boat was there, and I was there, but you were not there. Of course I didn't come. As I walked gloomily back through the streets of Weston, I reflected upon the uncertainty of the fruition of all human hopes and desires." [This was evidently an allusion to the widow Clicquot.] "The reflection was depressing but edifying, as showing that too much reliance upon the movements of one's friends is not to be looked for in this lower world, where more changes are recorded than the changes of the moon. Kind regards to J. Hope we shall meet in London, but I have learned to doubt all things mundane. "Yours, W.

"P.S.—If ever you show me up again in print, I'll put the matter in the hands of my family lawyer.

"P.P.S.—Having raised my expectations, I hope you will consummate them in town, in regard to *Veuve Clicquot*."

This note speaks for itself. Here we may safely leave W. to the reflections of his own conscience. Human nature at best is many-sided, and the heart deceitful above all thing.

Cardiff itself has no striking beauties of architecture or position to commend it. Like every town all over the kingdom, its suburbs are

widening. As population increases, so also must streets and houses increase. And population gets larger every day. Many souls emigrate; many die; but still more are born, live, and flourish: though how many of these do live is a matter of marvel if not of miracle to those who are familiar with the byways of London. It must be true, as says the French proverb, that there is a special providence for children. But for this, amongst the poorest and lowest, few surely would be reared. You constantly see pale, emaciated infants languishing in the arms of sisters or mothers; the latter dirty, ragged, unhealthy-looking, both morally and physically. The infants, apparently, are at death's door. If they belonged to a more refined state of life, they would die. But here they do not die. They struggle and fight upwards into a sort of existence; an existence which turns them out sickly, puny,

HIGH STREET, CARDIFF.

and stunted, perhaps, but yet with breathing-room in the world. There they are: the spark of life has conquered; though in how many cases would it seem better had the struggle ended differently! But yesterday I passed through a terrible bit of London; loathsome as a plague-spot. One of its most favoured courts rejoices in the name of *Frying Pan Alley*. You turn up Frying Pan Alley, which is a cul-de-sac, and not only can touch the walls on either side with your hands, but almost with your shoulders. The place is indescribably dreadful and filthy. During daylight it appears to be thickly peopled with women and babies—especially the latter. Yesterday a group of girls and infants lounged on its entrance-step. Could a sketch of them be given just as they then looked, it would read a lesson more eloquent than words can utter. The babies were lying flat, their eyes closed, with chalky, hollow faces, with black rims round their eyelids. The girls, varying from eight to eighteen or nineteen, were pitiable objects,

familiar, doubtless, with every species of crime and wretchedness, but to goodness all unknown. Growing up with the better part of nature, born with everyone in conjunction with the worse, perfectly unthought of, so that it inevitably dies out perhaps for ever. What an enormous amount of trouble we take to convert—say the Hottentots or the Patagonians! What societies; what subscriptions; what meetings; what preachings of sermons by great and popular men in the Church! Perhaps the one ought not to be neglected for the sake of the other. But if the Establishment were to rise up in a body to convert London, as it often rises up and shakes out its ruffled feathers for the benefit of the poor heathens; who after all will be judged only according to their lights; this seething metropolis would not still be the black hole, the fearful abode of sin and depravity, that it has been for countless ages: a state of things that in this enlightened, mission-loving nineteenth century is not on the wane, but on the increase.

Let us return to Cardiff, though it will be but to leave it again immediately. But you entered it by land, and now you must leave it by water. Just one week after my arrival at Cardiff, the ship was ready for sea. In that time she had discharged the ballast taken in to bring her round from London, and stowed away her cargo. At nine o'clock p.m. on Saturday night we passed through the locks.

It was very dark. At such times how mysterious seems the dark, deep water; how silent, how powerful, whether as friend or foe. Every plash of a rope or oar, every ripple, finds a corresponding echo in the mysterious recesses of the heart. There is something awesome in this immense mass of timber, gliding noiselessly through the water with so imperceptible a movement that you can only mark her progress as yet by the passing landscape. She merges from the locks into the wider basin, and so out into the yet wider roads. You draw a deep breath as you feel that you have left your native land, home, and home-ties behind you. For weeks or months to come, perhaps years, you are on the bosom of a treacherous element, though, happily, not at its mercy. In the power only of Him who orders the winds and holds the seas in the hollow of His hand.

The dark light upon the water gives it a cruel, glittering look in these first moments of link-snapping between sea and shore. But by-and-by the depth ceases to seem so cruel, and you gather from it even a certain repose. There is something in the vast deep which appears to fathom the very depths of the soul. It searches out its inward parts, and quickens them into stronger, more intense life. The spirit seems suddenly to have taken wings, and to be soaring away far out of the limits of the body, panting to accomplish a whole world-full of mighty deeds; and in the same moment, seeming to stand out in contrast with the boundless immensity of the ocean, comes the depressing realization of the shortness of the space of life given us in which to accomplish

those great deeds. The ocean, as an emblem of eternity, appeals to, and holds silent commune with, that part of us which is immortal. We have no wish to speak as we look around on the wide waste. Words grate upon us. The deepest emotions of our nature cannot be put into language. It is impossible for the finite part of man to grasp the infinite. Yet how many pause a moment to feel this? How often, for instance, say at the opera (music, too, is soul-touching) after a melody that would cause us to hide our faces if we were alone, are the deeper emotions of the soul shocked and shattered by a neighbour enthusiastically clapping his hands with the sound of a hundred castanets, and crying out with the lungs of a stentor, "Bravo! well sung, indeed!" That man has an ear to be tickled, perhaps, but not a soul to be touched. So in the midst of this vast water, whilst you stand trembling at the mystery of your own existence, a voice suddenly puts a question to your ear, suggested evidently by the self-same agency that appals you: "My dear sir, are you a disciple of Isaak Walton?"

Ahead of us, divided by certain fathoms of rope, is the tug, upon which we are for the present dependent, and which by-and-by is to prove itself a broken reed. It is moving slowly, and the plash, plash of its paddle-wheels smites upon the ear like the measured snort of a sea-monster. The fiery eyes of its lights are shining a warning upon advancing foes; not quite a superfluous precaution in these days of collisions and runnings-down.

When the ship was well away from the land, with no possibility of communication, all hands were mustered on the main deck for the purpose of going through the "roll-call." As each man answered to his name he passed out of the group from left to right before the captain. When it was ended, to the captain's surprise, not one man on the articles was missing: all had joined. This was better luck than past experience had dared to hope for. This over, the captain gave them a short address. In proportion as they were good men and true so would they find him a good master. After this the first and second officers proceeded to pick out alternately their own men—those who would be in their watch. By this process the crew is divided into two distinct companies, and system is maintained.

Soon after this, when eight bells had struck; midnight; I turned in for the night, and soon, for a time, slept the sleep of a quiet conscience.

Par parenthèse, do you understand how the bells of a ship are struck? For the benefit of the uninitiated, the science had better be recorded. It is less difficult to master than the pons asinorum, or thorough-bass, and unlike the mysteries of freemasonry, is not a secret to be kept inviolate. One bell is struck for every half-hour; at half-past twelve, one bell, at one o'clock, two bells, and so on up to eight bells, when they begin over again; so that eight bells are struck at the hours of four, eight, and twelve of the day and night. The bell is

struck every half-hour at one end of the ship, and has immediately to be answered by the bell at the other end. In a large vessel in the dark night hours, there is something weird in this chiming, and in the answering echo, struck by an invisible hand. As during the night the striking frequently woke me, so lying there in the bunk, the echo would be listened for and come as an assurance that there were watchers keeping a sharp look-out for the safety of the good ship. Would that in the waves of life, the eye of Faith was ever as ready to hear the chiming of the Safety Bell!

The tug, it has been said, proved as a broken reed. The next morning was wet and blowing; it was of no use to turn out early. J. had been on deck occasionally since six o'clock; but more to reconnoitre than for anything there was to be done. As long as the pilot is on

EAST BASIN, CARDIFF.

board the captain is supposed to leave everything to him: for the time he is as a guest in his own home. We were to have been at Lundy Island at ten o'clock, and here, at nine, having made some way in the night, we were drifting back towards Cardiff.

"A pretty state of things," exclaimed J., coming from above, "wind and tide against us; the tug not strong enough to do her work. Instead of towing us out to sea, we are dragging her back to Cardiff."

No less startling than true. The Cardiff tugs are not strong; they are seldom called upon to tow so fine a ship as this out of the channel. Our tug this morning was as helpless as a baby in the hands of a giant. At eleven o'clock she altogether gave up the struggle, detached herself from us, and steamed away. The pilot, fearing for the safety of the vessel in these narrow waters, had all the sails set and put back and anchored just outside the Penarth Roads, within ten miles of Cardiff.

This was an unfortunate start, but the patience of those most con-

cerned was yet more to be tried. The wind was dead against their putting out to sea. Until it changed they would have to remain at anchor.

There we were, beating about in the narrow waters of the Channel, in sight of the Flat Holme and steep Holme rocks: in the distance the land stretching down, so that in imagination the eye could fix itself on the very spot of Hallam's grave, whilst memory repeated over and over again those words of "In Memoriam,"

"Break, break, break, at the foot of thy crags, O sea."

There were the crags and there was the sea; and though we could not hear the surge breaking over the rocks, it was quite possible to do so in fancy.

Each time the ship made a fresh start, there was a tremendous commotion in getting her ready for it. All hands were sent forward to raise the anchor and the forty-five fathoms of chain-cable that connected it with the vessel. This took a long while, and the monotonous song with which the sailors kept time, sounded to the unfamiliar ear very much like a dirge or a miserere. The anchor up, the men would climb the rigging, and hang on to the spars and ropes aloft like bees to a hive. The sails would gradually unfurl, and flap in the wind with a noise like the report of musketry. The pulling of ropes and squaring of sails and the shouts and song of the men, mingled confusedly with the rushing winds, and the ship would gradually swing round, pitching and tossing in the restless waves. Things in the saloon went reeling from one side to the other, and legs would become unsteady. The sky overhead was dark and lowering; clouds hurried past, not so very many feet out of reach. A cold, drizzling rain, which penetrated to the marrow, fell. The Bristol Channel was not at its best. But for one evening it all cleared off. The land came out splendidly; the clouds disappeared, and gave place to blue sky. The setting sun gilded the water, and the hills, and the rocks, and went down in a red glow. We expanded like roses in a June morning. All nature smiled, and how delightful the contrast! I exclaimed at the glories of the sky; glories that J., familiar with tropical sunsets, treats with sovereign contempt.

Between the Saturday night and the Thursday morning, the ship twice made a start after her first attempt. Each time the treacherous wind, for a moment favourable, veered round again, as if determined to play us ill. There was nothing for it but to put back just outside the roads. The pilot declared he had never in his life before met with such an experience at that time of the year.

On the Thursday morning we were still within ten miles of Cardiff. The weather had almost without intermission been "dirty." This morning it had ceased raining, but the sea was rough and chopping. I began to think there might be no end of it. It seemed ignominious to go back to Cardiff, even if a chance offered. On the other hand it was

equally impossible to stay there for ever. Work awaited me in town; friends at home might begin to fancy me drowned or gone off to the Cape (some of them actually did think so, and worried themselves into a fever, just as poor, gentle Miss Sophia worried herself into a high pitch of screaming hysterics when I disappeared down the pit's mouth). Finally I determined that if an opportunity of getting ashore did present itself, it should be seized upon.

Within five minutes, strangely enough, the occasion turned up. A pilot-cutter hove in sight, was hailed, and came alongside. In less than no time I had packed up, swung into the rigging of the cutter, and dropped into her, bag and baggage. Hasty farewells, and we were off, making for Cardiff. Gradually time and the wide sea separated us more and more from the noble ship, until she could only be seen with a glass; and finally, turning a corner, became lost to our view. I was

ENTRANCE TO BUTE DOCK.

landed at Cardiff just in time to have a comfortable bath, and catch the express to London.

Thus, with a certain sense of failure, ended my first sojourn in the Bristol Channel. But far greater fret and worry was going on in the good ship I had left riding at anchor in its unsteady waters. We quitted Cardiff on the night of the 1st of August. The next morning, at ten, the ship should have passed Lundy Island. I left her on Thursday the 6th inst., and she did not finally pass Lundy Island, and really start on her voyage, until Sunday the 16th inst. Picture to yourself that fortnight's irritation; the wear and tear of nerve-tissue to a newly appointed commander, bent on making the fastest voyage on record. How dependent they are on winds, those who "go down to the sea in ships, and occupy their business in great waters!"

Here is an extract from a letter received from J. only a few days ago. It will tell the reader how they fared after I left them, buffeting about

the channel, longing for fair winds as a stranded crew longs for daylight:—

"It was fortunate for you, as far as weather was concerned, that you left when you did. The very next day it came on to blow twice as hard, with cold, disagreeable rain, which lasted, without any intermission, until the day we finally sailed. I say finally, because we again made two separate attempts to get away which proved futile, and twice we dragged our anchors until we were obliged to pick them up and beat back to our place, with 125 fathoms of cable out. It was something awful at times. You remember the American that was lying abreast of us? She dragged from the place with both anchors down, and brought up, goodness knows where, but turned up again all safe afterwards. Well, we got under weigh, and I am only sorry now, and have been so ever since, that you left us at all, for you would have enjoyed the view of such a panorama, or whatever you choose to call it, as seldom falls to a sailor's experience more than twice in a life-time—to that of a landsman, perhaps never. The steady old pilot, with his antediluvian pantaloons, had sole charge, and we had as good a 'smashing match' the night before we made Lundy as anyone could wish for, carrying whole topsails through a living gale of wind, the rain pouring down in sheets, and the sea making clean breaches over the unfortunate ship. But we were obliged to do it, for the wind hauled a bit when we were we could not tell how far off or how close to the 'lee shore,' and it became indispensable to 'carry her off,' as the term goes. And right gallantly she did her work. You would have enjoyed it! The glorious plunging, hissing, and slashing of the good old ironsides, as if she were battling and wrestling impatiently and obstinately with every enraged sea that opposed her headlong career. The motion, given time and circumstances, was superb—was awfully splendid—but to a landsman would have seemed frightful in the extreme. And the first instant that the utter blackness of the night—which had throughout been rendered more weird-like and dense on account of the green spray on the starboard bow, and the red spray on the port (you remember our lights); for nothing else was visible except the phosphorescent blaze of the breaking seas; the very instant that this blackness gave place to the first and faintest grey glimmer of dawn, there was no eye that was not stretched anxiously away to leeward, dreading to find what we had been struggling to escape, and what, with God's blessing, we did escape, the crue rocks under our lee.

"But the night over, and daylight or daydark set in—for the torrent of rain continued, though the wind moderated—the question naturally was, where were we? So we found our depth and stood over towards the English side, and at last made out the shape of the land close to us through the rain. The worthy old-fashioned pilot recognized it for the land lying nearest Lundy Island, the latter in fact only

fifteen miles away to the N.W. So away we went again to hunt it up, and—missed it!

"Here was a go! The wind was more fair than it had been, and the pilot was on board. No land, no boat in sight, and no possibility of picking up either again without running back and repeating the previous night's experience. So I called a council and very quickly came to the conclusion to take the pilot with me, until such time as we should meet a ship. I took charge, made sail, and stood away to the N.W., clear of the Welsh land, as we thought. But at three o'clock in the afternoon (now comes the panorama) the rain which had never ceased to fall in perfect sheets, rendering the day almost as dark as an ordinary night, suddenly, and without the slightest notice beyond a glare for about two minutes—which had the effect of drawing all our attention to the N.W. quarter—passed over us, wind and all, and settled away to leeward of us, black and opaque as any wall, and leaving us, in less time than it has taken me to write it, becalmed on the bluest water, and under the clearest and most glorious of blue skies; without a cloud to be seen, except the frightful chaos to leeward; right underneath the cliffs of Tenby Castle; the sun in all his splendour just dipping behind the battlements. Tenby Bay, and the town just to the right of it, was a marvellous picture, and the land on both sides, stretching away till lost in space on the clear horizon, presented an amount of beauty and colouring that Turner himself would scarcely have dared to attempt. There we waited for a cutter we had signalled to come off for the pilot, who, now that I had time to look at him, presented a truly deplorable appearance, cruelly augmented by the glory of the sunshine. An object I should have pitied could I have stopped laughing. However, whilst the cutter was dawdling off, for it was almost a calm, he went below, and after a shave, a wash, and a collar, you wouldn't have known him. He looked like a new pilot out of a bandbox. The old boy had actually brought a rig-out with him to make a dandy of himself when he went ashore. He smiled with satisfaction at his own juvenile appearance, and his joy was complete. I handed him over clear expenses and a note of thanks, and we parted with mutual regret. Sic transit gloria pilot!

"Then was the time I would have given something to have brought you down with us. To have landed you in that calm, beautiful bay; where you might have seen us make a start with all sail set, and everything around delightful. What a jolly journey you would have had from Wales, after your late experiences and the excitement of having been run away with! Well, we started, cleared the land, weathered Scilly, and got becalmed in the Bay of Biscay. Then away again to the westward of Madeira and the Cape de Verdes, light winds all the way. Over to Cape Palmas, with a southerly wind, then across the line, and through the S.E. trades, to windward of Trinidad, and then away

straight for the Cape, where we arrived on the 52nd day out, the fastest passage of the season. Just fancy! we never shortened sail all the passage! With the exception of lowering the royals for a signal now and then, what sail we set in Tenby Bay we carried to the Cape!"

And now, reader, if you have with any small degree of interest or pleasure (it is more than I could expect) followed me so far into the regions of South Wales, the coal-begrimed docks of Cardiff, the unromance of Frying Pan Alley, and the chops of the Bristol Channel, I will, by your leave, next month take you northwards, amongst the undulating hills and valleys and rippling streams of Merionethshire, and the quiet, beautiful sea of Barmouth, whither fate conveyed me some weeks after leaving Cardiff. There we can take a glance at the ruins of Harlech, from whose hoary battlements you get so grand a view of the chain of Welsh mountains, that boasts Snowdon for its crowning glory, and hear the rippling and rushing water as we climb the torrent walk of Dolgelly.

Upon which, dear reader, as the showman says, I make my bow and the curtain falls.

C. W. W.

ABIDE IN ME.

DEAR Lord, we would obey Thy sweet command,
And, though unworthy, still in Thee abide;
We would for ever hold Thy guiding hand,
For, quitting Thee, whom should we have beside?
Who builds without Thee, builds upon the sand,
A house too frail to bear life's stormy tide;
Who builds in Thee, builds on the rock-girt strand,
And, when the tempest bursts, has where to hide.
Oh, Eldest Brother of man's guilty race,
Who quitted Heav'n to dwell with us on earth,
That we in Thine might see our Father's face,
And in Thy death might find our great new birth!—
Oh, living Vine! no other life have we;
The branches die abiding not in Thee.

EMMA RHODES.

THE GRAVE IN EGYPT.

MANY a man would have voted the place "stupid," but to Ralph Arnold it seemed a very haven of repose. He had been a wanderer on the face of the earth for ten years. Having no one's pleasure to consult but his own, his nearer relatives being dead, he had gone wherever his roving fancy had led him. Had idled in the gay French capital, moralized in the Eternal City, dreamed in Venice, lingered on the Rhine, climbed the pyramids of Egypt, and fought the tiger in the jungles of India. But he had come back to his native land travel-weary, now; and when his guiding star chanced to settle over the pleasant little village of Grassmead, or, as he christened it, "Sleepy Hollow," he resolved to halt and rest. Yes, here he would pitch his tent for the summer, and fish, and imagine himself a boy again, if he could.

One day in the month of June, when all the pretty gardens were radiant with colour and sweet with the perfume of roses, Mr. Arnold went out to fish. Seated on a moss-grown log, trying to beguile the finny tribe into the belief that the nice worm he had thrown into the water was only a worm and nothing more, he was startled by a fresh young voice, evidently addressing him.

"I say it is a downright shame to entice the poor little fishes to their death in that way! Now, if I were a siren, I should certainly lure you to destruction for your cruelty."

Dropping his rod, utterly oblivious or indifferent to the fact that a fine fish was on the hook, Mr. Arnold turned to see whence the voice came. A young girl who might have been taken for a vision of Flora herself, so bedecked was she with flowers, was leaning against the trunk of a tree behind, regarding him with a look of mock severity. She had a wreath of roses entwined carelessly round her hat; a little basket that swung from her arm was filled with wild flowers and mosses, while from one shoulder trailed a long, green vine, in vivid contrast to the white dress she wore. Evidently she had been thus decking herself out for pastime.

"I fear you would have found it an easy task, fair lady," Ralph said, bowing gallantly. And at the sound of his voice, the first sight of his half-turned face, the girl started back a step or two.

"Oh, I beg your pardon," she cried, in some confusion. "I mistook you for some one else. I thought it was my cousin, Mr. Greyson."

"I am very much indebted to Mr. Greyson," returned Arnold.

"I think the sun must have blinded me," she observed, in a vexed tone; and she caught the look of involuntary admiration that sat in the stranger's handsome eyes.

"What a bewildering little beauty it is," was running through Ralph Arnold's thoughts. "And how strangely familiar her face seems to me!" Where on earth had he seen that fair face, framed in its beautiful golden hair? Not for a few moments could he tell; but all at once the recollection came to him. He was back, in thought, in the Vale of Chamouni: he and his fellow traveller, Karl Douglas. They were preparing to make the ascent of Mont Blanc, and Douglas—as if the prevision lay upon him of what was to be ere many weeks went by—took a beautifully painted miniature from his breast and showed it to him. The lovely golden hair, and the steady look in the violet eyes, had never left Arnold's memory.

"Should anything happen to me," Douglas had said, "send this back to the lady whose address you will find outside a packet of letters among my traps. Send both to her, Arnold; portrait and letters."

Arnold had done so. And he now certainly thought he saw the same face before him in this young lady's. But he would set the doubt at rest.

"I believe," he said, taking off his hat, "I have the honour of addressing Miss Kaulbach?"

"That is my name," she answered, in surprise.

"I am Ralph Arnold."

The look of wonder died out of the blue eyes, and a little wave of sadness swept over the fair face. "Then you were——"

"Karl Douglas's friend and fellow traveller," he said, interrupting her, and he was standing close to her now. "I was with him when he died."

Christine Kaulbach held out a hand so white that the blue veins seemed to stain it.

"I cannot meet as a stranger one who was the friend of Karl Douglas," she said, as Arnold bowed low over the white hand. "Are you staying in the village, Mr. Arnold?"

"Just at present I am. I have taken the lodgings at Mead Farm for a month, but shall probably remain all the summer. But — I do not think it was to this place that I addressed the letter to you?"

"No, no. My aunt has only removed here for the summer—like yourself. We are at the white house just outside the village, Rose Lawn."

"And—may I venture to call on you?" he inquired, as she was moving away.

"Indeed yes," was the cordial answer. "My aunt, Mrs. Cuff, will

be pleased to see you: and I shall like to hear what you can tell me about Mr. Douglas."

On a garden chair at Rose Lawn, the following evening, sat Mr. Arnold and Miss Kaulbach. Their voices were low and sad: there seemed ever to be a sadness in the gathering twilight. The stars were coming out after the hot day: the moon was rising behind the trees.

He was telling Christine Kaulbach of the lover—her lover—who had died during their tour in Egypt, not many weeks subsequent to that well-remembered day at Chamouni. Telling her of the firm friendship that had existed between himself and that lover; of their happy Bohemian wanderings; and lastly, of his friend's death—how the last word on poor Karl's lips had been "Christine."

"We dug him a grave under two stately palms, Miss Kaulbach. When I left, the scarlet poppies were blooming over him."

It was a mournful story; a mournful theme. When it was ended, and Arnold's voice died off into silence, nothing was to be heard save the splash of the pretty fountain and the chirp of a myriad insects in the dew-wet grass. "I am so glad you were with him when he died," said Christine at length, looking up with tear-gemmed eyes. "So very glad that he had one friend to go with him to the entrance of the Valley of Shadows."

But, before more was said, Mrs. Cuff called to them. Tea was waiting.

Ralph Arnold's heart was strangely stirred as he went down the dewy, scented walk that June evening, pausing to pluck a water-lily wet with the spray from the fountain. "It is like her," he thought, the "her" meaning the blue-eyed girl he had just left.

Often and often after this did Mr. Arnold call at Rose Lawn, and always found a welcome. And so, through all the glowing, ardent summer they were together; and what the result? The polished man of the world found his heart was not invulnerable. And she? Of course she did not love him. How could she, when her heart was in the grave in Egypt? But it was pleasant to be with him; he was a thorough gentleman; and he gave her wonderful word-pictures of other countries. Above all, he had been the friend of Karl Douglas. It was a sort of mournful pleasure to hear him talk of Karl, she said to herself. But, had she questioned her heart honestly, she might have found that the pleasure lay in listening to the low music of the wonderful voice, rather than in hearing of her dead lover.

And did Ralph Arnold despair? Not at all. It suited his dreamy, poetic nature, this sort of dream-life they were living.

But this lotus-eating existence could not go on for ever. One evening Ralph found Christine seated on the banks overlooking the river. The

girl still persuaded herself that her heart was sacred to the memory of her lost love. Mr. Arnold was a dear friend, nothing more. She did not realize that the dark deep eyes were fast crowding out the memory of the merry blue ones asleep under the palms in that far-off plain. Seating himself below her, the young man looked up at the face dearer to him than all the world.

"Of what were you thinking?" he asked. "Sighing after some far-off dream of paradise?"

"Oh, no," she laughed, "I was not sighing at all, and as for my thoughts, they are not worth repeating. But here," handing him the book she had been reading, "is something that will be vastly more entertaining and instructive. Will you read to me?"

"I beg pardon, Miss Christine," he returned, with a smile, "but I'm too lazy to read. I believe the soft languor of the nearly Indian summer has stolen into my veins. I find myself unwilling to do anything more energetic than smoking or dreaming, or perhaps talking, if you will listen." And, stretched on the mossy carpet, his head resting on one shapely hand, he did look the personification of handsome indolence.

"Well, I don't wish to encourage idleness, and I object to smoking; so if you will not read, Mr. Arnold, you must talk," Christine said, with pretty imperiousness.

"What shall I tell you, Christine?" he asked, toying with the silken tassels of her glove, which he had picked up from the ground where it had fallen. It was only within the last few days that he had taken to call her "Christine."

"Tell me of Germany, the home of Schiller and Goethe. Germany is my fatherland, you know, Mr. Arnold."

"Yes, I know it. But you have not lived there?"

"No. My father died when I was very young; and my mother—she was English—brought me here. Karl had relatives in Germany too, and loved it. I wish I could go there! Please talk to me about it, Mr. Arnold."

"Very well, Miss Christine; we will imagine ourselves in the 'Fatherland:' the hills yonder, wrapped in purple mists, and the river at our feet will help the illusion." And, leaning back against the mossy bank until his dark locks almost mingled with the golden ones that rippled down over the girl's shoulders, he painted such a mellow golden picture of Germany, that Christine declared she could hear the ripple of the blue Rhine and see the peasants gathering grapes on the purple-clad hills of Bingen.

"I envy you your travels," she said with a sigh. "It has been the one dream-wish of my life to see all those beautiful places. But I suppose it will never be realized."

"And why not, Christine?" he asked, starting up and speaking upon

impulse. "Why not see them with me—as my wife? I have loved you always, Christine, since the first moment we met."

The girl's heart gave one mighty throb of pain. Or was it joy? Even then she did not know, as she looked with pitying eyes on the eager face so near her own.

"Oh, Mr. Arnold, I never dreamed of this! I thought you knew that I had no love to give; that my heart was in that grave you made under the palm-trees. I was Karl Douglas's promised wife."

"And I was his dearest friend," returned Arnold. "I would not wrong Karl Douglas for worlds; but he is dead, Christine, and it is no wrong done to him to tell you of my love now. Oh! my darling, if you could love me I would serve as Jacob did for Rachel, and wait as many years." And there was a world of passionate feeling in the misty depths of the dark eyes.

The girl's own eyes were misty as she answered him: answered him in perplexity and pain.

"Oh, I am sorry, but it cannot be. You can only be my dearest friend, Mr. Arnold. You will be that, will you not?"

"Always," he said, almost crushing the hand he held, as he let it fall in her lap. "But, oh! Christine, if you could have loved me!"

She simply shook her head, and a grave silence supervened. Both were looking at the distant hills. Mr. Arnold saw he had spoken too soon; and he took up the book beside them.

Opening it at hazard, he saw some lines, and read them out in a low, musical voice. They were not too good, but they seemed appropriate.

"Flow down, cold rivulet, to the sea,
Thy tribute wave deliver,
No more by thee my steps shall be
For ever and for ever."

Why is it that we never appreciate anything until we are about to lose it, or have lost it? As he read, it suddenly occurred to Christine that she could not live away from the man at her side. The love that had been slumbering in her heart all the summer, rose up unmistakably now, and she knew what it meant.

"Yes, I am going away," Ralph said, answering the mute question in her eyes as they stood up together. "I must go away, Christine. We have had a beautiful midsummer dream: but I wanted more than the dream, you see. And now nothing remains but to try and find the fabled river of the Ancients, and drink and forget. Forgive me," he added, noticing for the first time that Christine was weeping, "if I have said anything to wound you; believe me, I did not mean it."

Christine crushed back the tears. Oh, if she could only tell him the truth! But shame held her back. What would he think of her? Would he not despise her for being weak and silly, and not knowing

her own mind. Alas, yes!—and she turned away in the direction of her home.

Mr. Arnold picked up the broad-brimmed hat, and they put it on together over the bright golden hair. Christine was trembling. Never should he tie them more: and—he stooped and left a iss on the red lips. Was he much to blame?

"Forgive me, Christine; it was the first, it will be the last. Are you offended?"

Offended! when her very soul went out to him in that kiss.

He went home with her. Mrs. Cuff was not visible, and they were alone. Christine, feeling unsettled, ill at ease, went to the piano.

"Will you sing for me?" he asked.

"What shall it be?"

"Anything you please."

Then she sang a tender little song of farewell. There was a suspicious tremble in her voice, but she bore up till she came to the words—

"After sweet still comes the bitter,
And the moments though so fleet,
To the brim were filled with pleasure,
Now they're growing bitter-sweet."

Then there was a break down. The golden head had fallen on the piano, and tears like rain were deluging the ivory keys. In a moment Ralph was at her side, his hand on the bowed head.

"Is it bitter-sweet, Christine? Are you sorry for me?"

No answer, but he could feel the slight form quiver as if in agony. A great wave of joy swept over him. Could it be possible that the girl cared for him, after all?

"Christine!" he cried, "if you do not speak, I shall go mad with joy. Can it be that you do care for me a little, after all?" Still no answer. Lifting the bowed head, he sought to read the girl's face. The cheeks were hot with blushes; the tear-wet eyes were closed.

"Christine!" he murmured. "Little white dove! Mine at last!"

He drew her head to his shoulder. He seemed hardly certain yet.

"My darling, won't you speak to me! Just one word!"

"Ralph!"

It was only one word: but it sounded very low and sweet: and Ralph Arnold was at rest.

Ah Karl! Karl Douglas! The grass is green over thy grave; and a warm, living lover has taken thy place in the heart sworn to be true to thee in time and eternity.

It is not pleasant to think that we shall so soon be forgotten when once we have passed out of sight for ever. Nevertheless it is the way of the world. And as to the grave in that far-off Egyptian land—the ind dews of heaven will keep it green.

PARKWATER.*

BY THE AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER I.

BRINGING-UP.

IN a certain quiet street of London, chiefly if not entirely filled by lawyers and their offices, there flourished some years ago the eminent firm of Lyvett, Castlerosse, and Lyvett. An extensive practice had they; and some other firms in the street would watch with an envious eye the shoals of letters and deeds delivered at their door by he morning postman, wishing only a tenth part of such shoals would come to them. The partners bore the character of honourable men; and certainly they were so. The three floors in the house were consecrated to business. The ground-floor was chiefly appropriated to clerks; on the first-floor were the private and consulting rooms of the partners; and on the next story were clerks again. This left free the kitchens, which were under ground, and the attics in the roof, in which apartments dwelt a man of the name of May, his wife, and daughter. May was the trusty porter or messenger of the firm, took care of the house on Sundays and at nights, and was much esteemed by his employers as an honest, respectable servant. Mrs. May cleaned the offices, made the fires, and scoured the stairs; and Miss May was a damsel of ten years old. She was being brought up—well, we shall see how.

Mr. Lyvett, the first partner in the firm, was a wealthy man. Apart from the proceeds arising from a long and successful practice (which had come down to him from his father), his wife, who was of very good family, had brought him a large fortune. They lived at the West End, and mixed more in fashionable life than it is usual for lawyers to do. All Mrs. Lyvett's connections lay amid it; and Mr. Lyvett himself was of rather good descent. Their family consisted of two sons, James and Frederick, and some daughters. James was already taken into partnership, and his name was the third in the firm. He was married, and had a house of his own. Frederick, the younger son, was only a boy yet.

One night in winter, a clerk chanced to remain at the office beyond the usual hour. When the rest left he was left behind. It was young Mr. Jones. He was just articled, had copied a deed carelessly and imperfectly, and so was ordered to remain over-hours and copy it again.

* This Story appeared many years ago in one of the first-class periodicals of the day. It has now been rearranged, and partly rewritten for the ARGOSY.

A strict disciplinarian was Mr. Rowley, the overlooking clerk of Lyvett, Castlerosse, and Lyvett. The porter was out that evening, and Mrs. and Miss May were in the kitchen, the former washing up the tea-things, the latter seated on a low chair, and devouring by the blaze of the fire, the fresh number of *Caterpillar's Penny Weekly Repository of Romance:* Caterpillar being a popular writer with the million.

"Anything new there, Sophiar?" asked the mother.

"Law, ma, yes! Such a splendid tale! 'The Knight of the Blood Red Hand.' It begins beautiful."

"You'll try your eyes, reading by firelight, Sophiar. Come to the candle."

"I wish you wouldn't make a fuss," was Miss Sophia's answer.

"You'll not read long, I can tell you. As soon as ever I have finished these tea-things, I'm a-going to clear the pianer, and you'll come and practise."

The young lady gave a jerk with her shoulders, and a kick with her feet, both of which movements might be taken as emblematic of rebellion. Mrs. May was a foolish woman. To say the least of it, she was so in regard to her child. All her own spare time was devoted to the devouring of a certain kind of pernicious literature, supplied then as extensively to the "million" as it is now; perhaps more so. It served to fill her head with the most ridiculous notions; and May, her husband, sanctioned them. Mrs. May had resolved that the child, Sophia, should be brought up "a lady, edicated and raised above her spere," as she rather often expressed it. In this resolve, she was upheld not only by May, but by her sister, a Miss Foxaby, who was a lady's-maid in a very fine family somewhere up West. Sophia had no objection in the world; she was already an incipient coquette, inordinately vain; and quite as much at home in the intricacies of the *Weekly Repository of Romance* as her mother was. Poor child! Poor child! its pernicious teachings were growing with her growth, and strengthening with her strength.

Mrs. May was as good as her word. She cleared the square piano, which appeared to be laden with miscellaneous articles of culinary utility, not generally found in association with pianos, opened it, and put one of the wooden chairs before it. Miss Sophia, however, declined to disturb herself.

"What was the good of your father a-buying of the hinstrument, and what's the good of your having a genus for music, if you don't practise?" demanded Mrs. May. "Come, miss, no shuffling. And you have not looked at your book-lessons yet."

"Ma, how you do bother!"

"Come this minute, I say, or I'll put you to bed——and give them stupid romances to me," added Mrs. May, whisking the leaves out of the child's hand.

"You don't call them stupid when you read them yourself; and *you* don't like to be disturbed at them, though you disturb me," raved the child, in a voice between screaming and sobbing. "The other night when father kept asking for his supper, you were in the thick of the 'Blighted Rose,' and you wouldn't stir from it, and he had to get out the bread and cheese himself, and fetch the beer!"

"Never you mind that, miss. You come to the pianer as I bid you. It's not your place to reflect on me."

Sophia, finding resistance useless, flung some books on the chair, to make it higher, and flung herself atop of them, dashing into what she called "the scales" and her mother "the jingles." Mrs. May drew a chair before the fire, placed her feet on the iron fender, snuffed the candle on the table behind her, and opened the publication she had taken from her daughter. Before, however, she was fairly immersed in its beauties, or the first few bars of the jingles had come to an end, a tremendous noise overhead caused them both to start.

"Sakes alive!" uttered Mrs. May—a favourite exclamation of hers, "what's that?"

A somewhat prolonged noise, as of a stool or chair being moved violently about, was now heard. Sophia jumped off the books.

"Mother! suppose it should be an apparition!"

"Suppose it should be a robber!" was the more practical remark of Mrs. May. "He may have stolen in to kill us, while he walks off with the law papers. I *daren't* go and see."

"I'll go and see," answered Sophia; "I'm not afraid of robbers; and I don't suppose they'd hurt me." She took the candle from the table, hurried fearlessly upstairs, and knocked at the front office door.

Mr. Jones, the young clerk, not being used to solitary evening employment, had dropped asleep over his work, with his stool on the balance. Certain sounds caused him to awake with a start, when he and his stool went down together. Picking himself and his stool irascibly up, he inflicted on the latter sundry bumps on the floor, by way of revenge, and was just settling to his copying again, when somebody knocked at his door.

"Come in," cried he, sullenly.

Very much astonished he looked when the knocker presented herself. A blue-eyed, pretty child, with flaxen hair that curled on her shoulders. Dressed well, she would have been an elegant child; but, dressed as she was, in all the colours of the rainbow, flaunty, dirty, and with a profusion of glass-beads glittering about her as necklace and bracelets, she looked like a little itinerant actress at a country fair.

"Why! who and what are you?" demanded the young gentleman.

"If you please, we did not know anybody was left," replied Sophia. "When the noise came, we thought it was a robber got in, so I cam to see, but ma was afraid."

"Who on earth's 'ma'?" repeated Mr. Jones, unable to take his eyes off the child.

"My ma. Down stairs."

"Do you live here?"

"Yes," said she, drawing herself up. "I am Miss May."

"Oh, indeed!" returned the young man. "Was not that a piano tinkling? It was the sound of that startled me up, and sent the stool off its legs. The first time I ever heard of a piano in a lawyer's office."

"It's mine. Father bought it for me."

"Yours! Where do you keep it?"

"In the kitchen," answered the little girl. "We moved the dresser out into the back place where the copper is, to make room for it. It's opposite the windows, and I practise at night when I come home from school."

"Why don't you give us a serenade in the daytime?" demanded young Mr. Jones, delighted at the amusement which appeared to be striking up. "We might get up a waltz when the governors are out."

Miss May shook her head. "Father says it must *never* be opened till everybody's gone; the gentlemen would not like it. So ma keeps dishes and things atop of it all day, for fear I should forget and unlock it, when I'm at home from school at twelve o'clock."

"Well, this is a rum go!" muttered Mr. Jones to himself. "How many brothers and sisters have you, child?"

"I have not got any of either. And that's why ma says she can afford to spend more upon me. I'm to be a lady when I grow up."

"Thank you, my little girl, for the information. You look like one. I should say you might be taken for an Arabian-Nights princess: only you are too smart."

The child took the mocking compliment to be meant in earnest. She bridled her head, and her unoccupied hand stole up to twirl round the ends of her pretty ringlets. In the endowment of vanity, Nature has been prodigal to many of us, but she had been remarkably so to Sophia May.

"Sophiar!" called out a voice, timid and panting, from the lower regions. "Sophiar! What is it?"

"Who is that?" quickly asked Mr. Jones.

"That's ma. She ——"

"Sophiar, I say! Who are you talking to? Who *is* there?" repeated the voice.

"Ma," answered the child, putting her head out at the door to speak, "it's one of the gentlemen, not yet gone."

Up raced Mrs. May, flurried and dubious. Mr. Jones recognized her as the lady he had seen on her hands and knees, cleaning the front door-step the first morning he came, when he had misunderstood the

clerks' time, and had arrived an hour too early. She knew him as the young clerk recently entered, whose friends were intimate with the Lyvetts.

"Bless me, sir! I should not have took upon myself to send Sophiar in here, but we thought everybody was gone, and was alarmed at the noise. Sophiar, miss"—changing her tone to a very angry one—"when you saw it was all right, why didn't you come away again directly?"

"Don't put yourself out, Mrs. May; she has done no harm. What time do you get this office open in the morning?" he added, as if struck with some sudden thought.

"About half-past seven, sir, these dark mornings. I begin with this floor first. But I get all my sweeping over and the fires alight, before I sit down to my breakfast."

"Then I'm blest if I won't knock off for to-night, if I can get in at that hour," ejaculated Mr. Jones. "I shall have time to finish this beastly thing before old Rowley comes. But he had best mind, again, how he gives me my day's writing to do over twice, for I won't stand it. Good-night to you, Dame May. Put out the gas."

"Sophy," said Mrs. May, when they returned to the kitchen, "did he hear the sound of the pianer?"

Sophy nodded in the affirmative.

"What did he say?"

"He asked if the piano was here; and I told him it was, and it was ours."

"Then you were a little ape for your pains. You should have told him that it was a sound from the next house, and stood to it that it was if he'd disputed it. Your father don't want the Mr. Lyvetts and Mr. Castlerosse to know of the pianer; they'd make a fuss perhaps. Never scruple to tell a fib, child, in a necessary cause."

"Can I have that paper now?" asked Sophia.

"No," snapped Mrs. May, "I have hardly begun it. Get on with your jingles."

From the above little episode of one evening, the reader may gather somewhat of the manner in which Sophia May was being trained. It need not be enlarged upon. Her parents were making that most reprehensible and fatal mistake of rearing her to be above her station; *above them.* Such mistakes were not so common in those days; but, as the world knows, they are springing into mad fashion now. No training for the working classes can be more pernicious, or is likely to bring forth more disastrous fruits. In Sophia May's case—and hers is a true history—the error was added to by her being allowed the run of those wretched weekly romances. Sophia's parents had married late in life, and were decent, hard-working people; and if they had had the good sense to make their child hard-working too, they would have

given her comfort and content for her portion. Mrs. May had been an inferior servant in a high family, had picked up there some exalted ideas, and the publications she had addicted herself to reading did not tend to sober them. Undoubtedly the child was a pretty, fairy-looking little thing; and a fancied resemblance to one of the aristocratic daughters in the family, where Mrs. May had served, first put ridiculous notions for Sophia into her brain. The father was a more sensible man, but he was so ardently attached to this only child that he too readily fell into the snare, and upon that one point was now as extravagant as his wife. For their station they were in easy circumstances. The man's wages sufficed for their wants, in the humble way they were accustomed to live, Mrs. May had saved money, and Miss Foxaby was ever ready to produce funds to be spent on her pretty niece Sophia. She furnished not only funds but clothes. All the very smart things Sophia flourished in came from her: cast-off relics of the family she served. Strange that the father and mother could not see the incongruity of what they were doing! The child, with her flounces and furbelows, her music and dancing, her pernicious romance-reading, and her fostered vanity; and they, with their household drudgery, living amidst their kettles and saucepans and cooking and cleaning! what an absurdity it all was! She went to a day-school in the neighbourhood, where she mixed with a rather better class of children as to position; indeed the mistress had refused to take her at first on the score that she was the child of servants. There she picked up some learning, and left off some of her idioms. The way in which the child was dressed out on a Sunday was something wonderful to behold. Muslins in summer, satins in winter, streamers of many colours, gaudy artificial flowers, and snow-white feathers!—nearly all of them Miss Foxaby's gifts; and all of them with the first bloom off. In the morning of Sunday, she would be, as the mother expressed it, "in her dirt," watching the preparations for dinner, or exercising the piano, and at one o'clock fetching the beer from the public-house; for May liked to take as much rest as he could get on a Sunday, even from beer fetching. But in the afternoon she was turned out in style, and told to "walk up and down the street, that people might see her"; her father and mother, who on that day would sit at the windows of Mr. Lyvett's room on the first-floor, watching her with looks of love and admiration; the former with his pipe, and his beer in a pewter pot, the latter with her weekly newspaper. Which, however, she could scarcely coax her eyes to read a line of, so absorbed was she with that vision pacing the quiet street in her young vanity, whose long-tailed silken streamers fluttered out behind her, to the amazement of every chance passer-by. They did not go to church; they did not take her. Now and then, indeed, Mrs. May would attend evening service with Sophia; but it was very rarely. They were moral, well-behaved people, the father

and mother, but religion was not known in their house: that is, religious teaching and religious exercises. What did they promise to themselves would be the end of all this, when the child grew up?—that she would be content to continue her abode with them, and live as they did? Where else was she to live? Poor Sophia May! events that really did happen in after life were not so much her fault as the fault of her most foolish parents. And this is a true picture; a simple narrative of events that actually occurred.

CHAPTER II.

HOME FROM FRANCE.

EVERAL years had gone by. One Thursday night in summer, the quiet street already mentioned (and it was the dullest and quietest street imaginable after business hours, when the various lawyers and their clerks had deserted it for the night) was aroused from its silence by the echoes of a cab, which came fast down it, and pulled up at the door of Lyvett, Castlerosse, and Lyvett. What could the cab want there at that hour? Plenty of cabs and carriages too, might be seen before the door in the day, but never at night.

"Why, if it's not old May!" exclaimed Miss Jenkins, putting her head out at the next-door window; she and her sister being laundresses to that house, which accommodated several firms. "Where has he been to in a cab? Here, Esther, come and have a look at old May in a cab!"

Miss Esther Jenkins quickly ran to the window: a young lady in a blue veil was following old May out of the cab.

"Well I never!" cried Miss Esther. "Who *can* it be, Martha? There's the gaslight on her face now—what a nice-looking young lady!"

"Why! it must be the daughter come home! Oh, it's nobody but her, you may rely upon it, Esther."

"I'll go in and see what she's like presently, when they are settled a bit," cried Miss Esther. "It's her, safe enough."

"Safe enough" it was. Miss May, who had been for two years to a school on the French coast, had now completed her education, and returned home for good. When Miss Esther Jenkins entered, she found her sitting in the kitchen with her parents. Sophia was eighteen now, and certainly very good-looking. The long curls she had worn as a child, were now twisted in a peculiar way, "French and fashionable," Miss Jenkins called it, round her head. She was above the middle height, and easy in her movements, very much pinched in about the waist, with fine falling shoulders, an admirably fitting dress, and a prodigious deal of pretension. Miss Jenkins stood, taking it all in at a glance and noting various items in her mind, especially the young lady's first

declaration that she did not know how she should get on in London, as she had forgotten her English.

Sophia turned to the place of the old piano. It was there still, and she opened it. She struck a few chords and started back with a scream.

"Mais, c'est horrible, ce piano-là! Je ne ——"

"Do try to speak in English, Sophiar," urged Mrs. May, with tears in her eyes. "How ever shall we get along if you don't? What is it that's the matter? Did you see anything that frightened of you?"

"It is such a—what do you call it in English?—*dreadful* piano. I had as soon have touched an electric battery. It has set all my finest musical nerves on the jar: ma tête est percée. I shall never be able to touch it again: jamais."

"She has not quite forgot her mother tongue," interposed Miss Jenkins. "Which is a consolation worthy of thanksgiving."

Sophia turned a sharp look upon her. There was a sarcastic ring in the words that she did not like.

"Did you have no English girls whatever at the school, Sophia?" asked Miss Jenkins.

"Mais oui."

"Did you have no English girls whatever at the school?" repeated the visitor, apparently determined to persevere till she got a reply she could understand.

"Some of the young ladies were English."

"And did you never talk together?"

"De temps en temps. Now and then," more hastily added Sophia, perceiving the question was about to be repeated, as before.

"Then it's very singular how you can have forgot it at all," retorted Miss Jenkins, significantly, "for when schoolgirls get together they *do* talk."

The tone brought fire into the temper of Miss May. She cast a look of scorn on the offender, and coolly turned her back upon her.

"It is not agreeable to me to be troubled with strangers to-night," she said, more curtly than politely. "I am tired with my sea-voyage, Miss Jenkins, and the company of my father and mamma is as much as my nerves will support."

"Then I'll make myself scarce," said Miss Jenkins, who was more inclined to laugh than to take offence, "and come in some other time, when you are in company cue, Sophia."

Sophia gave only a cold nod in answer. "How *can* I ever again support the companionship of these wretchedly low people?" ran her thoughts. Miss Jenkins was inwardly making her comments on *her*: tit for tat.

"I say, Esther," whispered Mrs. May, following Miss Jenkins upstairs to fasten the door, "she don't mean no offence; she's only knocked up after the sea-sickness."

"Where no offence is meant, none is took," replied Miss Jenkins. "*I* know what the little tempers of young folks is. We was young ourselves once."

"But ain't she beautiful?" pleaded Mrs. May. "And such style! Nobody could take her to be anything but the real lady."

"Thorough bred," responded Miss Jenkins. "Good-night."

"Good-night, Esther. "Oh—I say! I wish you'd tell your Martha to beat her mats of a morning towards the house on your t'other side, instead of on this. She's later than I am, and her dust makes my steps and pavement in such a mess. One day Mr. Lyvett asked if I had cleaned them. Good-night."

"I wish 'em joy of her, Martha," were the first words of Miss Jenkins to her sister. "Such an affected, stuck-out fine lady you never saw. What they'll do with her in that kitchen, I can't tell. She wants a saloon and a pair of footmen."

"What can they do with her?" debated Miss Jenkins. "If they've only a kitchen they can't put her in a parlour."

"*I* don't know. Rely upon it, she'll never reconcile herself to stay there with them."

"She's handsome, is she not, Esther?"

"A handsome face, and a handsome figure. I don't say to the contrary: but she has got an ugly look, if she's put out. I know this: if fortune had blessed me with a daughter, I'd rather see her a female travelling tinker, than I'd bring her up to be a fine lady, not being one myself."

Before the following day was over, Mrs. May awoke to the same fact that Miss Esther Jenkins had only suspected—Sophia would never stay at home with them. Was it likely that she would? She, with her good looks, semi-education, and superficial accomplishments, and her mind formed on Caterpiller's romances!—could her father and mother expect her to make her home in a kitchen, amid kettles and saucepans?

"Your Aunt Foxaby says she can get you a beautiful place as under lady's-maid, Sophia," remarked Mrs. May. "Your French tongue——"

"My Aunt Foxaby says—what? interrupted Sophia, turning round to face her mother. "Get me a place as lady's-maid! Why, do you suppose, or does she suppose, that I would become a servant?"

"But you'd live quite the life of a lady, Sophiar," replied poor Mrs. May. "Them ladies'-maids in a good place mostly does."

"For goodness' sake don't talk nonsense!"

"Well, my dear, I don't see what else you be to do, if you can't reconcile yourself to stay along of us here."

Sunday came. And after dinner Mr. May started to Hyde Park, to fetch his wife's sister, impatient that she should feast her eyes with the improvement in Sophia. Mrs. May began to wash up the dishes, and Sophia ascended to the "Sunday windows," and sat down there.

She held in her hand the weekly newspaper; but she glanced at it discontentedly. The fruits of her education were already beginning to show themselves. She had been discontented ever since she came home. A slight dispute, arising out of her own ill-temper, had occurred the previous day with her mother, in which she had said that the home was no fit home for her, and that the vulgar atmosphere of a kitchen would kill her. Her residence in France had not tended to improve the tone of her mind and heart, however it may have helped her French. She had been to one of the cheap seminaries there: twenty pounds a year, paid quarterly in advance, included everything, from the first day of January to the thirty-first of December. Shrewd Miss Esther Jenkins might have spoken out her opinion of them, had she gone to pass a week in one, as to their eligibility for a girl who was to be "a lady."

Sophia May sat at the first-floor window, feeling very miserable, longing for excitement, vowing that she would not long put up with this, and sullenly glancing over the "bête" newspaper. After the beauties of Eugène Sue's novels (which the school had procured en cachette), English literature was tame, even that of a low weekly paper. Suddenly she threw it down with a gesture of impatience; and, dashing open the window, looked from it up the street, wondering how much longer her father and aunt would be.

They were not in sight. Not a soul was in it, save one; on a Sunday it was always particularly empty. This one, who was a foppishly-dressed, though not ungentlemanly-looking young man, was coming down it with a quick step. He halted at the door underneath, and knocked: a thundering knock. Sophia, who had drawn back, peeped out again, and saw a somewhat simple countenance, a moustache that would have been fair had there been enough of it to be seen, light blue eyes, and an eye-glass stuck in one of them.

She would not have answered the door for the world; so poor Mrs. May, who was in the attic with her gown off, had to throw a shawl over her black petticoat and hasten down; but not before a second and third knock had resounded through the house. She dropped a curtsey when she saw who it was.

"Oh, here's somebody at last! I thought you and May were asleep," was the gentleman's salutation.

"I hope you will be so good as to excuse it, sir. May is gone out, and I was up at the top, a-cleaning of myself."

"Have you seen my cigar-case?" demanded the gentleman, entering the front office on the ground-floor. "I must have left it here last night."

"I have not been into the rooms, sir. I don't generally go in till Monday morning."

"I must find it," he resumed, looking about. "I had put some

prime cigars in it, ready for to-day; and the shops that keep anything worth smoking shut themselves up on a Sunday, and be hanged to them! You need not wait, Mrs. May. I can let myself out."

"Shall I look in the rooms upstairs, sir?"

"No, it's not there. It's here if it's anywhere."

Mrs. May retreated aloft; and the gentleman, after an unsuccessful search, marched upstairs himself, whistling some bars from the last night's opera. But his tune came to an abrupt close; for on opening the door of his father's room, he found himself, to his extreme astonishment, face to face with a lady.

She had risen at his entrance. A handsome girl, with confident manners, whose fair hair was braided round her head in elaborate twists and turns. Young men are not very competent judges of attire: the eyes of this one only took in the general effect of the lady's dress, and that was splendid. It had once been an evening dress of Miss Foxaby's mistress. He hastily snatched off his hat and dropped his eye-glass.

Who in the world was she? As to her having any connection with Mrs. May, her dirty shawl and her black petticoat, such an incongruity never would have occurred to him. Though not usually wanting in fluency of speech, it rather failed him now, for he was at a loss how to address her.

"I beg your pardon," he was beginning, but she spoke at the same moment.

"Pardon, monsieur."

Oh, she was French, then! Had she crossed the Channel in a balloon, and been dropped into the offices of Lyvett, Castlerosse, and Lyvett, by mistake? How else had she come? and what did she want there? He began to recal his French, not a word of which had his tongue ever uttered since leaving school.

"Madame, voulez-vous excuser moi? Je suis—je trouve," and there he came to a stand-still—what the dickens was "cigar-case" in French? Fortunately she helped him out.

"I beg to ask your pardon, a thousand pardons, for addressing you in French. I have been so long accustomed to speak only French, and having but since a day or two returned to England, that I forget myself à chaque instant. I fear I am in your way. Shall I retire?"

"By no means. I will not disturb you for a moment. I am in search of a—a small parcel—which I mislaid yesterday."

As he spoke, his eyes fell on the "parcel." It was on the corner of the mantelpiece. At the same moment some vehicle came rattling down the street, turned round, and drew up at the door.

He took a step to the other window and looked from it. Not the one she was at. It was, as he expected, his own cab. He had walked from the chambers of a barrister close by, where he had been lounging

away an hour, and had ordered his groom to follow him. With an elaborate bow (and certainly a respectful one) to the lady, he quitted her presence, descended the staircase, and departed by the front door.

"Again Sophia peeped from the window. She saw him open the "parcel," light a cigar, puff away at it, and step into the cab, which bore the Lyvett crest. The groom ascended to his place, and the smoke went puffing up the street. She had been at no loss to know him after the first moment. It was, in fact, young Mr. Lyvett.

"I wonder who she is, and what she does there?" thought he as he drove onwards. "Don't much think my father would like ——"

The cab stopped. He pulled up the horse so suddenly that its head and fore-legs were jerked into the air. Mr. May and his sister-in-law were just passing down the pavement arm-in-arm, abreast of it.

"Hallo, May! Here."

Mr. May touched his hat, and leaving Miss Foxaby on the pavement, approached the cab, and touched his hat again.

"May! who the deuce is that, down yonder?"

"Sir?" cried Mr. May.

"Who's that lady in my father's private room?"

"I don't know who's there, sir," answered Mr. May. For it really did not occur to him that the gentleman present would not know his daughter. "You don't mean my wife, or my ——"

"Your wife!" impetuously interrupted the young man, giving an admonishing touch to his impatient horse. "What else will you ask me if I know? There's a lady there, I tell you. As handsome a girl as ever I saw."

Recollection dawned upon the porter. "With light hair, sir, and coral beads in it, and a green-and-gold-looking dress on?"

"Green-and-gold for all I know. Something dazzling. She speaks French."

"It is Sophiar, sir."

"Eh? Who?"

"Our daughter, sir. She came home last Thursday. She has been finishing of her edication in France at a French school."

The gentleman stared for a few moments at Mr. May, as if unable to understand him. Then returned his cigar to his lips, nodded slightly, shook the reins, and was whirled round the corner on his way to his father's residence in the West-end square, where he dwelt.

"I'm sure I should think it's the first time any of 'em has come down on a Sunday," observed May to his sister-in-law as they walked on. "There's Sophiar a-leaning out of the window."

Miss Foxaby rushed in, and up the stairs, to clasp her niece in her arms.

"Oh my goodness heart, Sophia! how beautiful you do look! Well, if ever I saw anybody so much improved in all my life!"

"I am grown, am I not, Aunt Foxaby?"

"Grown lovely, child. Ah, and somebody else thinks so: I could see it. Only think of his asking May who you were! Somebody we met in this street with his cab and groom, all so stylish!"

"Who was that gentleman, father?" inquired Sophia. "I forgot myself as usual, and addressed him in French."

"Why, Sophiar, you don't mean to say as you've forgot him, as well as your English?" cried the wondering father, who took all his daughter's airs to be genuine. "It was young Mr. Lyvett."

"That it was a Lyvett I could see by the features; but I thought I should have remembered young Lyvett well. A haughty fellow with black eyebrows, he used to be, who looked down upon everybody."

"Sophiar's thinking of the eldest son," interposed Mrs. May, who was now attired for the afternoon. "This one is Mr. Fred. He was articled to a firm in the country, Sophiar, some house in a different branch of law business, and was never much here until lately. No wonder you didn't remember him. But he is twenty-one now, and has come back for good. They do say he's to have a share in the business by-and-by, the same as his eldest brother have got. Mr. Fred is ten times nicer to speak to than Mr. James. He haven't got that proud way with him. Of course he's a deal younger."

"Ten years younger, I should say," remarked Sophia.

"Well, and I should think he is. Mr. Fred's not much more than a boy yet. Mr. James seemed older at sixteen than he do at twenty-one."

"He came after his cigars," said Mrs. May. "He said he left 'em behind him yesterday. Leastways, the case."

"Sophia had better look out," cried Miss Foxaby, with a knowing nod. "Stranger things have happened. My dear, he said you were the handsomest girl he ever saw. And he took you for a real lady."

"Who said it?" asked Sophia, quickly.

"Mr. Fred Lyvett."

"I could see he was struck with me," thought Sophia to herself. "But, ma foi, where's the use of that? He is a Lyvett."

Retiring to the kitchen for tea, Sophia's future prospects were discussed. Aunt Foxaby led to it by observing that Sophia, with her figure, and her air, and her French, might command any situation she pleased as lady's own attendant, even to Royalty she might almost aspire; and that all she would have to learn now was a little hair-dressing—dress-making would come to her "spontaneous." Sophia's answer to this startled Aunt Foxaby, and nearly sent May off his chair. She meant to be a lady herself, she said, not maid to one; she was a lady already; and she asked what they meant by putting so great an indignity upon her, even in idea. It was very unexpected; and with one tacit consent the subject was allowed to drop.

(*To be continued.*)

CHRISTMAS EVE.

To you, dear friend,
Whose tender sympathy is ne'er denied,
Whose loving heart my own would never grieve,
Whose hand so often is my patient guide,
I send a greeting on this Christmas Eve.
Only a greeting ; but a wish sometimes
Is worth the gift another might bestow ;
And you remembering who penned the rhymes
Will welcome them right lovingly, I know.
We'll woo the shadows while the hearth is bright,
And have a twilight reverie to-night.

O do you hear the chimes—the bells at play—
That tell the same sweet story every year?
I used to think that every note was gay—
'Tis only children fancy so, I fear.
And they know not—how should they, who are young—
That in the merry peal *one* solemn bell
Is that which often, with an iron tongue,
Rings out for loved and loving ones a knell.
But we can recognise the sound again,
And with the pleasure comes a dash of pain.

Nay, that's too dark a thought for Christmas Eve,
When all should banish sorrow and be glad ;
We'll let it pass, and brighter fancies weave,
For all the bells, thank Heaven, are not sad :
There are the marriage bells which gaily ring,
And those, which sweetly summon us to prayer.
These happier echoes touch another string,
And whisper love and hope, forgetting care.
The carol singers, too—hark ! now again
Comes the soft music of their joyous strain.

At festival of Yule, old legends say,
Good spirits are abroad ; 'tis doubtless true.
I like the quaint conceit, and therefore pray
The Christmas Angels may be guarding you.
And now good night ; the shadows on the wall
Have danced themselves to sleep ; the fire burns low ;
Without, all silently the moonbeams fall,
Just as, perchance, they fell long long ago,
On that first Christmas Eve, whose memory bright
We cherish yet. And so once more, Good Night!

S. E. G.

A. HOPKINS. J. SWAIN.

IN THE CHURCHYARD.

THE ARGOSY.

FEBRUARY, 1875.

A SECRET OF THE SEA.

By the Author of "In the Dead of Night."

CHAPTER IV.

A BROKEN LIFE.

GERALD WARBURTON did not leave London for Pembridge next day, or for several days afterwards.

When Ambrose Murray learned that Gerald was the nephew of Jacob Lloyd, the man who had so befriended his daughter; and that Gerald's mother was the Minna Lloyd whom he remembered, and who had been one of his wife's dearest friends; he clung to him as a man who is being carried away by the tide will cling to the life-buoy which his hands have unexpectedly grasped. And, indeed, this man who, after having been closely shut up from the world for twenty years, found himself thrown again on the great stream of life, seemed as helpless and bewildered as some weak swimmer who contends in vain against the resistless tide that is fast carrying him away. He was more than bewildered—he was frightened by the vast whirlpool of London life in which he found himself such an infinitesimal atom. There had always been an element of weakness, of vacillation, in his character. He had always been one of those men who are inevitably crushed into the background in the great rush and struggle for life with which they are mixed up—men not lacking talent, but simply from want of energy and physique, and power of elbowing their way to the front, drifting year after year helplessly into the rear, seeing themselves distanced by younger and fleeter feet, and seeing the prizes that in the flush of youth seemed so close at hand and easy of attainment, receding hopelessly into the distance. Sometimes disappointment and bitterness of heart sour such men for ever; sometimes they sink into mere dreamers and idealists, who console themselves for the buffets of the real world by living as much as possible an inner life of their own, in which destiny is carved out by them

in accordance with their varying fancies, and in which they grasp—in imagination—whatever prizes please them best.

If at twenty-five years of age Ambrose Murray had been ill-fitted to withstand the rubs of fortune, it was hardly to be expected that his armour should be stronger or his sword brighter after his twenty years of incarceration from the world. It was, indeed, evident from the first, both to Miss Bellamy and to Gerald, that he would have to be treated in many ways as it might be supposed to be necessary to treat a grown-up child. He had forgotten so much, and he had so much to learn! The march of events had left him so terribly in the rear, that it seemed doubtful whether he would ever be able to reach the world's full stride again.

Then, again, as time went on and they grew to know him better, a doubt would sometimes make itself felt both with Miss Bellamy and Gerald as to whether some shadow of the terrible affliction which had overclouded his mind for years did not linger there still. On ninety-nine topics out of a hundred he would talk as sanely and sensibly as anyone; but the introduction of the hundredth would elicit from him some observation so bizarre, so outrageous, or, on the other hand, so childishly simple, that his hearers could only look at each other in dismay, and change the conversation as quickly as possible.

Ambrose Murray's chief employment in prison since the recovery of his reason would seem to have been the cleaning and repairing of all the clocks and watches in the establishment. When a boy of twelve at home he had been able to take his father's watch to pieces, clean it, and put it together again. The delicacy of the workmanship, and the exquisite adjustment of each part, with reference to the whole, had for him, even at that age, a fascination, a charm, that might have led him, step by step, into the highest walks of mechanics, had not a stern parental will decided for him that he was born to be a doctor.

As a result of his labours on the prison clocks and watches, Mr. Murray had contrived, little by little, to save up the sum of twelve pounds. Ten pounds of this amount he placed in the hands of Miss Bellamy the morning after his arrival in London, with a request that she would act as cashier for him in every way as far as the money would go, and that when it was exhausted she would not fail to let him know—although what he would have done in such a case to replenish his purse, it would have puzzled him to say. Just then, however, no such consideration troubled his mind. In his best days he had not understood or troubled himself much about money matters, and nowadays ten pounds seemed amply sufficient to last him for an indefinite length of time. And it did last him a very long time, thanks to Miss Bellamy's remarkable management; for when, at the end of two months, he said to her, "I think the ten pounds must be getting rather low, Maria"—he had always been in the habit of calling Miss Bellamy by her Christian

name—she only answered with a smile: "That shows how little you know about money matters. There's more than half of it left yet." Ambrose Murray was quite content to think that it was so, and troubled himself no further about the matter.

That first night Gerald took him to his own rooms; but the question that had to be settled next morning was, where he should live for the future. In London he would undoubtedly be safer from pursuit and detection than in the country; besides which, he wanted to be near Miss Bellamy. She was the one link that connected him with the past: away from her he would have felt as helpless as a being who had wandered by mistake on to the wrong planet. As it happened, there were two furnished rooms to be let in the next house to that in which Miss Bellamy lodged, and it was decided that there, for awhile at least, the fugitive should pitch his tent. It was highly necessary that he should both change his name and disguise himself to a certain extent—not that Murray himself would ever have thought of adopting any such precautions, but would have gone about as openly and unsuspiciously as the freest man in England. That some pursuit would be attempted, that some effort would be made to re-arrest him, there could be no manner of doubt; and both to Miss Bellamy and Gerald it seemed quite evident that unless some few obvious precautions should be adopted, his whereabouts could not long remain unknown to the police. It was accordingly agreed that for the time being he should change his name from Murray to Greaves—that having been his wife's maiden name; and that he should pass as a cousin of Miss Bellamy, who had come to London to look after some property that was in chancery. The next thing to do was to reduce the length of his flowing white beard and of his long white hair. What was left was then dyed black—its normal colour—and this simple change was enough to disguise him beyond fear of recognition by anyone who had only seen him as he was when he first took off his hat and plaid in Miss Bellamy's room. As he was still barely fifty years old, there was nothing incongruous about his black hair and beard; and when his sartorial needs had been duly attended to, the world saw him as a rather tall, frail-looking man, with a thin, scholar-like face, who stooped a little as he walked, and who seemed evermore intent on his own secret thoughts than concerned with anything that was passing around him. Not that the world, as exemplified by Ormond Square and its neighbourhood, ever saw much of him. He rarely stirred out of the house till dusk, and more frequently than not it was ten or eleven at night before he crossed the threshold, except when he went to see Miss Bellamy—which he did every day: but as he had only to step from one house into the next in order to do that, it could hardly be considered as going out. The noise and bustle of the streets distracted him—even daylight itself, except when it came winnowed through the interstices of the venetian blinds, seemed distasteful to him. The

friendly silence of the long, dark, suburban streets, where were no gaudy shops or glaring gin-palaces, suited him best. There he could think his inmost thoughts and commune with his strange fancies in silence and peace. There he could feel sure that no keen eyes were prying into his, and trying to find therein some gleam, some lurking trace, of that terrible demon whose fingers had scorched his brain once already, and who still, at times, seemed terribly near at hand, waiting—as in his childish days he believed ghosts used to wait for him—round some dark corner no great distance away, with his black cloak in his hands, ready to throw it over his victim's head the moment he passed that way.

After awhile both Gerald and Miss Bellamy were able to tell when this demon was haunting Murray's steps more closely than common. At such times, when not conversing with others, he would talk inaudibly to himself for hours together, unless interrupted, his lips moving as though in earnest assertion, but no sound coming therefrom. At such times, when walking out, he would turn his head slowly from side to side, but without raising his eyes from the ground, as though in search of something. On the first occasion that Gerald noticed this peculiarity, they were walking together, and he said to him: "Have you lost something, Mr. Murray?"

Murray started, looked up, smiled, and pressed his companion's arm more closely. "Yes, I have lost something," he said with a little sigh. "I don't exactly know what it is—but it's something. I shall find it again one of these days, I do not doubt." His voice was full of pathos as he spoke. Gerald never mentioned the subject again.

"Now that you are settled for some time to come, I presume that you will not be long before you break the news to Eleanor? You must remember that as yet she knows absolutely nothing." So spoke Miss Bellamy to Ambrose Murray one evening across the tea-table. Gerald was also there. This was the first time that Eleanor's name had been mentioned since Murray's arrival, and Miss Bellamy could bear the father's strange silence no longer.

"It is not my intention to tell my daughter anything at present. Why should I?" said Murray.

Miss Bellamy looked at him as though she could scarcely believe her ears. "Why should you not?" she said. "It seems to me that one of the very first things you ought to do is to tell everything to your only child."

Murray stirred his tea slowly for a few moments before answering. "Eleanor is well and comfortable, I hope," he said at last.

"Quite well, and quite comfortable."

"She is still living among her friends at Pembridge?"

"She is."

"And wants for nothing?"

"And wants for nothing, so far as I know."

"That is well. And she still believes that Jacob Lloyd was her father?"

"I am not aware that anyone has undeceived her on that point."

"Why should I be the first to undeceive her?"

"Jacob Lloyd is dead. You are her father, and you are now a free man."

"Precisely so. I am a free man because I have broken my prison bonds. I am a free man who is liable to recapture at any moment. I am a free man to whose name the stain of murder still clings."

"But Eleanor would never believe you to be guilty, as I have never believed you to be guilty."

"Possibly not. But why distress her by making her the recipient of so painful a revelation?"

"She is your daughter, and she has a right to be told the truth."

"As you say, she is my daughter, and perhaps she has a right to be told. But seeing that her ignorance has lasted for twenty years, it cannot matter greatly if she be kept in the same ignorance for a few weeks or a few months longer. That ultimately everything will be told her, I do not doubt; but not now—not till—till ——" Overcome by some hidden emotion, he faltered, and was dumb.

"Not till what, Ambrose?" said Miss Bellamy very gently.

"Not till I have proved my innocence to the world."

Miss Bellamy sighed, but said nothing. If Eleanor were not to be told her father's story till his innocence should be proved, then would it remain untold for ever.

"Do not think," resumed Ambrose Murray, "that I have not thought over, times without number, all that can be urged either for or against the telling of my story to Eleanor, and I have come to the conclusion that for a little while to come it had better remain untold."

"And do you think, Ambrose, that after such a length of time there is any chance, however remote, of your being able to prove your innocence?"

"I don't know: I cannot tell. I can simply hope. The world is full of apparent wonders, and Providence works out its ends in a way that we cannot fathom. I know how vain and futile must seem to you the prospect of my ever being able to prove my innocence; but it is for that purpose, and that alone, that I am now here. Had I not been sustained by such a hope, I believe that I should not have cared to seek my freedom. Years since, the desire for freedom, for freedom's own sake, burnt itself to a cinder in my heart by its very intensity. I came at last to cling to the narrow walls that had been my home for so long a time, as a limpet clings to its boulder on the beach, neither knowing nor caring for any horizon beyond its own few inches of rock

and sand. How is it possible for me to make you comprehend what simple things may become dear to a man who has been cut off from the world as I have been? The pair of robins that I used to feed, the candy-tuft that grew outside my bedroom window, the head-warder's motherless child, the laurel-walk in the garden, my box of tools—the source of so many happy hours: it was not without a pang of bitter anguish that I cast these behind me for ever, even though freedom itself was beckoning to me from the hill-tops!

"But an inner voice seemed to urge me forward, a will superior to my own seemed to guide my footsteps. In saying this I may be merely the victim of self-delusion. My hopes and wishes in this matter may have no better foundation than a few incoherent dreams. Once already my mind has been like an empty room, that is open to every wind that blows; and sometimes even now—Heaven help me!—I seem as if I had hardly strength enough to hold the door against the troop of demons that press and hustle to get in, and complain that I have dispossessed them of their home. But be this as it may, I am held and sustained by the hope of which I have spoken. It may prove to be nothing better than a broken reed; but till it is so proved, I will in no wise let it go: and till that time shall come, my daughter and I must remain to each other the strangers we have hitherto been."

"Have you no desire to see Eleanor—to kiss her—to clasp her to your heart?"

"Do not ask me!" he said with a sudden shrillness in his voice. Then in a moment he broke down utterly, and began to cry in a helpless, broken-hearted way that was very painful to see.

Miss Bellamy went round to him and laid her hand gently on his shoulder.

"Oh, Ambrose, forgive me!" she said, with tears in her eyes. "I did not think to hurt your feelings. I cannot tell you how sorry I am."

"It is I who am so foolishly weak," he said; "but I shall be better in a minute or two." He held out one of his hands. Miss Bellamy pressed it affectionately between both hers, and then went softly back to her seat. For a little while no one spoke.

Ambrose Murray was the first to break the silence. "Upwards of twenty years have gone by," he said, "since Paul Stilling was murdered one night at the Pelican Hotel, Tewkesbury, and the prospect of my being able to prove my innocence after such a lapse of time would to most people appear an utterly hopeless one; and even to me, in my most sanguine moments the chances of success seem very faint and far away indeed. Still, it is for this hope alone that I now live."

"Has any fresh evidence been discovered since the trial?" asked Miss Bellamy; "anything tending to exculpate you and fix the crime on the real murderer?"

"So far as I know, nothing has been discovered. The case virtually came to an end with my condemnation. The world believed me to be guilty—no one cared to sift further into the matter, and I was left to my fate."

"We none of us believed you to be guilty," said Miss Bellamy, with much earnestness. "But the evidence was so terribly against you, and events followed each other so quickly, and we poor women were all so bewildered and heart-broken, that—that we felt as if we could do nothing."

"As you say, Maria—you could do nothing; and I have never wronged any of those who were my friends at that sad time by thinking that more could have been done for me than was done. What was wanted was time, and that the law would not grant: time, and a man of strong will, and clear brain, and then, perhaps, the mystery might have been fathomed."

"Then, what it is now requisite to do," said Gerald, joining in the conversation for the first time, "is to reopen the case afresh; to set to work on it, in fact, as if the murder had only been committed last week, instead of twenty years ago."

"That is precisely what I propose to do," said Murray.

"And the first step is——?"

"To find out whether Max Jacoby is living or dead."

"Max Jacoby!" said Miss Bellamy. "I have not heard that name for years; but what a flood of painful reminiscences the mention of it recalls!"

"Who was the man you speak of?" asked Gerald.

"He was the man who murdered Paul Stilling!"

"You stare at me as if you believed me to be still mad," he added, after a pause, addressing himself to Miss Bellamy; "and you ask me in your thoughts, if you do not with your lips, what evidence I can bring to prove the truth of what I have just stated. My answer is, that I cannot adduce one tittle of evidence that would be considered worth a moment's notice in a court of law: but not the less sure am I that he was the man."

Neither Gerald nor Miss Bellamy could help being impressed by his earnestness, however disposed they might be to think that nothing but disappointment could ever issue from it.

"Have you any clue by means of which it may be possible to trace the present whereabouts of this man, Max Jacoby?" asked Gerald presently.

"I have no clue of any kind." He said this, not despondently, but as cheerfully as though the point involved were of no consequence whatever.

"As you said just now, Gerald, we must go into the case *ab initio*," he resumed. "I say *we*, because it may chance that now and then I

shall claim your assistance in the matter; and should I have to do so, I know that I shall not claim it in vain."

"That you will not," said Gerald warmly. "You may count on my poor services in any and every way."

"You must bear in mind," said Miss Bellamy to Murray, "that Gerald has not such an intimate knowledge of the case as either you or I have. He has heard a bare outline of the facts from me; but would it not be as well if you were to tell him the story in detail from your own point of view, and so enable him to judge for himself as to the mode in which he might be best able to assist you?"

"You are right, Maria, as you always are," said Murray. "Gerald shall have the story. It will not take long to tell. As a narration of events, nothing could appear more clear, simple, and straightforward; and yet, underneath it, there still lurks the foul mystery that poisoned my life—that condemned me to a horrible death—that broke my wife's heart—and that made of me the wretched creature I am now!"

He rested his head in his hand and was silent for a little while, calling up the memories of a bitter past.

"As you are no doubt already aware," he began, "I was brought up, at my father's request, to be a surgeon. I was in practice for myself, and had been married about two years, when my health, which had always been delicate, broke down. I was ordered to Malvern to try the hydropathic system, and there I stayed for four months, gathering strength daily. At length I found myself well enough to start for home. I had always been fond of walking, and on the present occasion I determined to shun the railways and do the entire distance on foot, going by easy stages so as not to over-fatigue myself. In pursuance of this plan I got as far as Tewkesbury, where I had made up my mind to stay all night. But already I found I was doing myself more harm than good by walking, and it was evident that I should have to finish my journey by rail. I sought and found shelter for the night at the Pelican Hotel. My purse was not very heavy, and I joined the company in the coffee-room. The company in question consisted but of two individuals,—Paul Stilling, a young Englishman, and Max Jacoby, a Dutch or German Jew of about the same age as myself. Stilling was a tall, slim, handsome young fellow, with closely-cropped black hair and a thin silky moustache. He was junior partner in a firm of Birmingham jewellers, and it transpired that he was then on his way, with a parcel of valuable jewellery, to the house of a well-known nobleman, resident no great distance from Tewkesbury. There was about to be a wedding in the family, and he was taking a selection of goods from which sundry bridal presents were to be chosen. He had engaged a bed at the Pelican for that night, and had ordered a fly to be ready at ten next morning to take him forward to his destination. Jacoby was a broad-built, resolute-looking man, with a thick

sandy beard and ear-rings. He was travelling for a firm of Sheffield cutlers.

"The two men had been dining together, and the meal was just over when I entered the room. Stilling at once entered into conversation with me, but the German only sat and looked at us. After I had finished my steak I joined them over cigars and a bottle of port. The evening was chilly, and we all drew up close to the fire. Stilling had evidently been drinking earlier in the day, and his voluble tongue had been made more voluble still by his potations. He did not fail to tell us who and what he was, and the object of his visit to Tewkesbury; in fact, he had the conversation pretty much to himself. I joined in occasionally, but Jacoby did little except smoke and turn his keen eyes from one to the other of us, interjecting now and then a gruff Nein or Ja when a point-blank question was put to him by the jeweller.

"At length nothing would satisfy Stilling but showing us the wedding jewellery, on the beauty of which he descanted in glowing terms. So he ran upstairs as nimbly as a lamplighter, and presently came back, carrying a small, square leather case under his arm. This case, when unlocked, was found to contain a small box, made of polished oak, clamped with silver, and having the initials P. S. outlined on the back with silver nails. The box was duly opened, and was found to be lined with purple velvet, and divided into compartments which were filled with jewels of various kinds. One after another Stilling lifted them tenderly out of their soft resting-place, in order that we might examine them. They flashed and scintillated in the gaslight, and threw out a thousand brilliant rays. Happening to turn my head, I could not help being struck with the change in Jacoby. He had put down his cigar in order that he might examine the jewels more closely, and was at that moment holding in his hairy, muscular hands a necklace of magnificent brilliants. But his hands were trembling as he held it, and his face had taken a yellow tinge, and his forehead had become clammy, and he was biting his under lip; and while I was looking, he flashed across at Stilling a look which said plainly enough: 'To make these mine I would kill you and a thousand like you!' That was how I read his look then; that is how I read it now. If ever there was murder in a man's eyes, there was in Jacoby's at that moment.

"When the jewels had been sufficiently admired, they were put back into their resting-place and locked up. A little later we bade each other good-night, and went off to our several rooms. I had ordered an early breakfast, and I left Tewkesbury by the 7 a.m. train, having taken a ticket through to Bristol. By the time I reached Gloucester, however, I had changed my mind. The weather was brilliant, and I should not be looked for at home for several days. Why not go down Hereford way, and explore the scenery of the Wye, and by so

doing gratify a wish that dated back for several years? I accordingly quitted the Bristol train at Gloucester, and booked myself through by another line to Hereford, which place I reached late in the afternoon. I was sitting next morning in the coffee-room of the hotel, plodding through my breakfast, when the door was opened, and a heavy hand laid on my shoulder, and next moment I found myself arrested on a double charge of murder and robbery. Stilling had been found dead in his bed at the Pelican Hotel: his property had all disappeared, and I was accused of the double crime.

"But I must not weary you. At the very bottom of my travelling bag was found a bracelet set with turquoises and diamonds, that had been the property of Stilling. In the murdered man's room was found a handkerchief marked with my initials. I had taken a railway ticket to Bristol, but had left the train at Gloucester, and had gone forward by another line in order to baffle pursuit—so they said. Taken in conjunction, these facts were enough to condemn any man, and they condemned me. Twelve men unanimously found me guilty, and the judge told me that he quite concurred in their verdict; and then I saw the black cap put on, and heard my own death-sentence pronounced, and heard my wife's wild shriek for mercy, where no mercy could be shown. Can you wonder that my brain gave way?"

He paused. In the silence they heard the clocks strike twelve.

"The same hand that put the bracelet into my bag put my handkerchief into the murdered man's room. It was the hand of Jacoby! How I know that—how I feel so sure of it—I cannot explain to either of you, and if I could you would only smile at me. In this world much of our highest knowledge comes to us intuitively, and by intuition only do I know that it was Max Jacoby who compassed the death of Paul Stilling—but that suffices for me."

"Then your idea," said Gerald, "is to find out whether this Max Jacoby is still alive?"

"It is. And I want you, out of your knowledge of the world, to advise me as to the best mode of setting about this business."

"I am going out of town to-morrow for a couple of days. I will think over very carefully all that you have said, and will make a point of seeing you immediately upon my return."

With this agreement they separated for the night, and early next morning Gerald set out for Pembridge.

Miss Bellamy had not deemed it necessary to say anything to Ambrose Murray as to the fact of Eleanor still passing as Jacob Lloyd's daughter, and still believing herself to be the heiress to his property. To have told him would only have unsettled his mind still further, and would have served no useful purpose. Besides which, Gerald's visit to Pembridge was for the express purpose of seeing Mr. Kelvin, and of ascertaining from him why he had omitted to carry out the instructions

conveyed to him in the sealed packet. In a few days more at the most, Eleanor would learn that she was not the daughter of Jacob Lloyd, and not the heiress she believed herself to be. Meanwhile, it was better, as far as Ambrose Murray was concerned, that these matters should remain untold.

CHAPTER V.

GERALD AT PEMBRIDGE.

THE mention of Matthew Kelvin's name by Miss Bellamy touched a chord of recollection in the mind of Gerald Warburton, but some time elapsed before he could trace back in his memory to the particular occasion on which he had heard it last. He had been groping about for some time, when suddenly a single flash revealed to him everything that he was looking for. It showed him a country inn, in the Lake district, and two men, weather-bound by the unceasing rain, perforce dependent on each other for companionship and the practice of those minor social virtues which such an occasion should undoubtedly call forth. They meet as strangers meet under such circumstances, but by the end of the third day they seem to have known each other for years. Glad as they are on the fourth morning to find that the clouds have dispersed and that the hill-tops can be seen again, they do not part without a certain feeling of regret, or without a cordial grip of the hand and a hope that, unlikely as such a thing seems, they may one day meet again. One of those men is Matthew Kelvin, the other is Gerald Warburton. Kelvin, at parting, had given Gerald his address, and had begged of him that, should he ever find himself in the neighbourhood of Pembridge, he would not fail to look him up. Gerald, at the time, had no address to give. In fact, it was not as Gerald Warburton, but under the name of "Jack Pomeroy," that he had made Kelvin's acquaintance.

A year or two previously, in the course of one of his rare interviews with his father, the latter had said to Gerald: "You are a disgrace to the name of Warburton!" "If that is the case, sir," said Gerald, bitterly, "I will disgrace it no longer."

When he next went out into the world, it was as John Pomeroy. His full name was Gerald John Warburton. So he took the John and tacked it to a name that had been common in his mother's family for generations; and it was as Jack Pomeroy, a vagabondising young artist, rather out at elbows, as clever young men often are, but a decidedly amusing companion for a wet day, that he had made Kelvin's acquaintance.

"I wonder whether he will know me again," muttered Gerald to himself as he walked down the main street of Pembridge on his way to Mr. Kelvin's office. "There was a little about him that I liked, and a

great deal that I didn't like. His joviality was merely on the surface; it had no foundation in his disposition. It was a mere will-o'-the-wisp, flickering fitfully over the darker depths of his character. Me he tolerated as one tolerates a droll when tired of one's own company, and has nothing more serious to do. For the time being he even made believe to be a Bohemian himself. It was a phase of character that he had rarely encountered before, and for forty-eight hours it fascinated him; forty-eight hours later he would have turned his back on it and me with a sneer.

"It is indeed a strange chance that has brought us together again after so long a time! I will tell him neither my name nor my errand for a little while. I will go to him as the Jack Pomeroy in whose society he once spent three days of bad weather. I will even pretend to be hard up, and to stand in need of a helping-hand. Probably he will order me out of the office; perchance he will ask me to dinner and put a sovereign into my hand at parting. It will be time enough to tell him my real business after I have put him to the test. Besides which, by concealing my identity for a little while, I may perhaps be able to glean some information as to his reason for keeping back for so long a time the contents of the sealed packet from Eleanor." It was in pursuance of this idea that Gerald had put on for the nonce an older suit of clothes than common, and had locked up in his portmanteau at the hotel his watch and chain, and scarf-pin. He found Kelvin's office in due course, and made his way into the entrance-hall, and was there received by Mr. Piper.

That young gentleman was what he himself would have called "down in the dumps." The obligations of gentility extend from the highest stratum of society to the lowest, and Mr. Piper felt that this morning he had lost caste in the eyes of Mr. Hammond—his guide, philosopher, and—in a far-off, Olympian kind of way—his friend. Mr. Hammond, walking down a by-street on his way to business, had come suddenly on Pod, who, in company with several other youths, was scraping with a knife the sweet interstices of an empty sugar-cask that was standing on the pavement in front of a grocer's shop. Unseen till he laid his gloved hand on Pod's shoulder, Mr. Hammond had said to him: "Here's a penny for you, Piper, to buy some sweetmeats with, but do, for goodness' sake, leave the sugar-cask alone." And so, with a smile and a sneer, had gone daintily on his way. Pod felt as if he could have bitten his head off, had such an anatomical feat been at all possible. He would not have cared half so much had he been seen by anyone else—even by Kelvin himself. But to have been seen thus ignominiously engaged by the elegant, the scented, the fastidious Mr. Hammond! Besides which, this was not the first occasion on which Mr. Hammond had found him engaged in a pursuit derogatory to that assumption of manhood and gentility which it was the secret ambition

of his life to maintain in the eyes of his patron. On his way home, one evening, Pod had been overtaken by a temptation which he found it impossible to resist. The temptation on this occasion took the shape of marbles. Pod had fallen in with three or four of his old schoolmates engaged in a game of knuckle-down, and fired by the recollection of his prowess in olden days, had for once flung gentility to the winds. Carefully depositing in a corner his chimney-pot hat, for the next ten minutes he was a boy again. This time, also, it was Mr. Hammond's voice which recalled him to a consideration of how far he had forgotten himself. "Well done, Piper," he said, as he came suddenly round the corner. "With practice and perseverance you will make a tolerable player. By-the-by, I promised to buy you something on your birthday. What shall it be? A hoop, or a kite, or a pretty coloured ball that you and the baby can amuse yourselves with in wet weather?" This had been very galling to Pod, especially when said before his schoolmates; and now, to-day, he had given Mr. Hammond an opportunity of sneering at him for the second time. This Mr. Hammond was Matthew Kelvin's one articled pupil. Attracted by Pod's shrewdness and keen common sense, he had "taken him in hand," as he himself phrased it; although whether such taking in hand would ultimately prove beneficial to Pod, seemed somewhat doubtful at present. Mr. Hammond found Pod useful as a go-between in his love-affairs. He was engaged to a young lady against the wishes of her friends. Any letters sent by him through the post were intercepted, and it was only by trusting to Pod's skill and diplomacy as a messenger that he could contrive to communicate with her at all. In such a case as this, Pod might be trusted implicitly, and Hammond knew it. He was rewarded chiefly with cigars, and now and then with an odd half-crown, or a pair of soiled lavender kid gloves; which latter articles, when cleaned, looked almost as good as new, and although somewhat large, created quite a sensation among Pod's friends and acquaintances, when worn by him on his evening stroll along the Ladies' Walk. Then Mr. Hammond had made Pod a present of an old silver-mounted meerschaum, which, although he found it somewhat full-flavoured at present, he would doubtless be able to smoke with comfort when he should have practised on it for five or six months longer.

But far beyond any pecuniary reward was to be counted the happiness of being in Mr. Hammond's confidence, and the inestimable boon of his society. Since Mr. Hammond had taken him by the hand, Pod felt himself to be quite a different sort of person: he had, as it were, emerged from the grub into the butterfly. The world and he were on altogether different terms from what they had been on twelve months ago. A year ago, for instance, he would not have thought of wearing a chimney-pot hat, or of wearing stand-up paper collars of the same

shape as Mr. Hammond's; or of carrying a slim silk umbrella to and from business. To be sure, the umbrella, however elegant and even useful it might seem when folded tightly up, was in reality so worn and dilapidated as to be quite incapable of being opened: but as this was a secret known to Pod alone, it did not matter greatly. Then it was surely a brilliant stroke of inventiveness to allow himself to be seldom seen in the town without a *Times* newspaper under his arm—generally three or four days old: but that was of no consequence. To be so seen seemed to add a foot to his stature, and it is impossible to say how much to his consequence.

But with all his boyish ways, Pod was a good son to his mother—a poor hard-working widow with a large family, of whom Pod was the eldest. He did his best to help her in every way, and would nurse the baby for hours together when he got home of an evening. He was not unmindful that his education had been a poor one, and three evenings a week he attended a night school, where he laid a tolerable foundation both of French and Latin: but of this he said nothing to Mr. Hammond. Neither did he say anything of the numerous books he was in the habit of obtaining from the town library, and over which he would pore of a night long after everyone else in the house was fast asleep.

Gerald Warburton was duly ushered by Pod into the private office. "If you can wait a minute or two, Mr. Kelvin won't be long," he said, as he handed Gerald a chair and a newspaper. Five minutes later, Matthew Kelvin opened the door and walked in. Gerald rose as he entered, smiled, and held out his hand. For a moment or two Kelvin was evidently at a loss.

"I seem to know your face," he said, "and yet you must excuse me if for the moment I fail to recollect where I have seen it before."

"Don't you recollect Jack Pomeroy and the 'Jolly Anglers' at Grasmere?"

"Of course—of course!" shaking him by the hand. "How memory fails as one grows older! But sit down and tell me how you have been getting on all this long time."

"Oh, with the proverbial luck of the rolling stone," said Gerald, as he resumed his seat.

Kelvin by this time had been able to note his visitor's appearance—to note that his clothes, although originally well-made, were now worn and shabby: and Kelvin never liked a man who did not dress well; to note that there was not a single item of jewellery visible, that his scarf was without a pin, and his pocket minus a watch, and that altogether there was a decidedly impecunious look about his unwelcome Bohemian acquaintance. In Kelvin's estimation, a man who could not afford to carry a gold watch was hardly worth knowing. He elevated his eyebrows, and felt sure in his own mind that before ten

minutes were over he should be called upon to disburse five guineas. "That's the worst of making chance travelling acquaintances," he said to himself. "They are sure to turn up at some future date and want you to do something for them. So many people want you to do something for them!"

"Not quite made your fortune, then?" he said aloud.

Gerald's only answer was an expressive shrug of the shoulders.

"When I saw you last you talked about going to the Antipodes. What has brought you back again?"

"Partly that lack of pence with which all really great men are afflicted, and partly a little private business which required my presence at home."

"You are a born Bohemian, Pomeroy—one of those incorrigibles on whom argument and advice alike are thrown away."

"Utterly thrown away—utterly: and I glory in the confession."

"And what are your prospects for the future?"

"I am happy to say that I have no prospects in particular. Never had such things in my life."

"Nor any present necessities?"

"Ah! now you touch me on a tender point."

"How can I be of service to you? Is there anything I can do for you in a modest way?"

"Well—you may invite me to dinner if you like."

"That I'll do willingly. I suppose if the dinner were supplemented with an offer of a five-pound note you would not feel offended."

"Offended! Not a bit of it," said Gerald with a laugh. "But remember this, Kelvin—I have not asked you for money."

"Oh, I fully appreciate your delicacy of feeling," answered Kelvin, not without a sneer. "Well—we dine at six sharp. No company, only my mother and my cousin."

Gerald rose and took up his hat. "I suppose you would find it somewhat difficult," said Kelvin, "after vagabondising about the world for so long a time, to settle down to any quiet steady employment: too monotonous and that sort of thing—eh?"

"I don't know so much about that," said Gerald. "Certainly liberty is sweet, and it is pleasant to be one's own master. Besides which, as yet I have given no hostages to fortune, and having only my own unworthy self to look after, I daresay that I should find it difficult to settle down into a steady, sober, tax-paying citizen, who sits on a stool from one year's end to another, and who knows the amount of his income to a penny. No, I am afraid that I should find such a life slightly tedious."

Kelvin laughed. "Why don't you go in for marrying an heiress?" he said.

"You talk, mon ami!—talk as if heiresses were as plentiful as blackberries."

"I don't think your heiress is a difficult fish to catch, especially by such a clever angler as I do not doubt that you are. But then you must make up your mind to be indifferent to good looks, and good breeding, and a few other simple et ceteras."

"Ah! there's the rub."

"But do you mean to say that the idea of marrying for money is one that you have never turned over in your mind?"

"I can't say that exactly, but my ideas on the point have been very hazy ones indeed: quite nebulous, I assure you: nothing solid or tangible about them."

"Nebulosity of ideas is a very bad thing in anybody. The sooner you bring them down from the clouds and condense them into a practical shape the better. First catch—not your hare, but your heiress; then bring all your powers of fascination to bear upon her, and then ——"

"My powers of fascination, indeed! You talk of me as if I were a rattlesnake."

Again Kelvin laughed, then recollecting an appointment, he looked at his watch. "Well, don't forget to be here at six sharp," he said: and with that Gerald went.

"A dinner, a five-pound note, and exit Jack Pomeroy: that is what Kelvin means," said Gerald to himself. "Well—he might have treated me worse than that. I'll not tell him who I really am till the last minute. I wonder what his motive can be for keeping back the information from Eleanor? But I suppose I shall know all about it by to-morrow at this time."

Gerald passed a by no means unpleasant evening. Neither Mrs. Kelvin nor Olive had ever been further from home than Paris. They were eager in their questions about the different strange places which Gerald had visited on his travels, and he was by no means loth to gratify their curiosity. What pleased Kelvin most was to see his mother so lively and full of spirits.

"Give me a look in at the office about eleven to-morrow," he said to Gerald as they parted at the door.

Half an hour later, Kelvin received a telegram which necessitated his starting for Scotland by the 7 a.m. train next morning. He was down betimes to breakfast; but early as it was, Olive was there before him, waiting to pour out his tea and attend to all his little wants. "I shall not be able to see Pomeroy," he said. "You can explain to him how I have been called away, and tell him that if he will leave his address I will write to him on my return."

"Have you any idea of doing something for him?" asked Olive.

"My idea is to send him a five-pound note and have done with him."

"You were mentioning, the other day, that Sir Thomas Dudgeon

was in want of an amanuensis and secretary. It seems to me that Mr. Pomeroy would be just the man for such a position."

"Oh, he's got ability enough for such a berth, I daresay. But, in the first place, I believe the fellow is too much of a Bohemian ever to settle down steadily to anything; and, in the second place, I know nothing about either himself or his antecedents. How would it be possible for me to recommend a man to Sir Thomas respecting whom I know nothing?"

"However much of a Bohemian, as you call it, Mr. Pomeroy may have been, he has both the manners and education of a gentleman; and I daresay that he would be able to satisfy you as to his respectability. Aunt was quite taken with him last evening, and when I went into her room this morning she desired me to tell you that she would take it as a kindness to herself if you would interest yourself for Mr. Pomeroy in whatever way you might think would benefit him most."

"Of course, if I thought it would please my mother, I might stretch a point in his favour, though really ——"

"It would please my aunt greatly if you would do so. It struck me that this situation at Sir Thomas Dudgeon's would be just the thing for Mr. Pomeroy."

"But, really, I don't at all see how I can recommend a man about whom I know nothing."

"You are going away; Mr. Pomeroy is to call here at eleven; let me see him in your place, and if he can satisfy me as to the respectability of himself and his connections, may I promise him the situation in your name?"

"Really, Olive, you seem very much interested in this man."

"I am interested in him, Matthew."

"Take care that your interest in him does not deepen into something far more dangerous; take care that you don't lose your heart to him."

Olive's colourless cheek flushed for a moment, but she answered quite calmly: "Your warning on that point is quite unnecessary, Matthew. But you have not answered my question."

Kelvin looked at his watch and then rose hurriedly. It was later than he had thought. He had barely time to catch his train.

"Do as you like about it," he said, not without a touch of irritation in his voice. "When my mother and you lay your heads together and conspire against me, I know that I may as well give in at once. Mind you, I don't think this fellow is worth half the trouble that you two women are taking about him."

"Blind—blind as ever!" muttered Olive to herself as she stood at the window and watched Kelvin hurrying down the street in the direction of the station. "A woman of my own age and any brains at all would detect my motive at once, but a man can rarely see beyond his nose."

CHAPTER VI.

"THAT'S THE MAN!"

As already explained, Mr. Piper had a tiny glass-fronted office, or rather den, all to himself, at the far end of the passage which led from the main entrance to Matthew Kelvin's premises. In the wall that divided the sanctum of Mr. Piper from that of his employer, was a small window of ground glass, which had originally been intended as a means of communication between one office and the other. Of late years, however, it had never been so used, Mr. Kelvin having adopted the modern invention of India-rubber tubes as the readiest and most convenient method of making known his wishes either to Mr. Piper or to the clerks in the general office. Since the little window had fallen into disuse, a thick green curtain had been hung across it, in order that the privacy of Kelvin's office might be still further secured; but, as it so happened, the object in view came at last to be defeated through this very precaution. One cold morning, Mr. Piper, while sparring at an imaginary opponent in order to keep up the circulation of his system, sent his elbow incautiously through one of the panes of the little window. There was no great harm done: a shilling or two would pay for the damage; but, for all that, Pod thought it best not to let Mr. Kelvin know of the accident. He knew that Kelvin was going out of town in the course of a few days, and he would take that opportunity of having the window mended at his own expense. Meanwhile, the curtain would effectually hide what had happened from his employer's notice.

In thus making his calculations, there was, however, one point which, to give Pod his due, had altogether escaped his notice. So long as the broken window remained unmended, the privacy of Kelvin's office was altogether gone. Pod had only to put his ear to the fractured pane in order to hear every word that was spoken in the other room. There was nothing but the curtain between him and the speakers. Pod, as a rule, would not have thought it worth his while to listen—would not have condescended to listen; but happening one day accidentally to overhear a few words of a certain conversation, he was induced to listen more attentively, and the result was that he quietly reached his pencil and note-book and took down the whole of the conversation in shorthand. "If I don't spoil their little game, my name's not Pod Piper!" he said to himself with an air of energy as he shut up his note-book. "The pair of cowardly vipers!"

The conversation stenographed by Mr. Piper, and denounced by him in such emphatic terms, was that which took place between Olive Deane and Gerald Warburton on the forenoon of the day following the visit of the latter to Kelvin's house. When Gerald called at eleven o'clock he was told that the lawyer had been suddenly summoned

away, but that Miss Deane was desirous of speaking to him. Inwardly wondering what Miss Deane could have to say to him, he sat down, but was not kept long waiting. Pod went to tell her that Mr. Pomeroy was there, and Olive came at once.

"My cousin has been called from home quite unexpectedly," she said; "and he asked me to see you in his stead."

"He could not have chosen a ——"

"No compliments, if you please, Mr. Pomeroy. I think that neither you nor I care greatly for that sort of thing. Besides, I am here to discuss a matter of business with you. Pray pardon the question, but are my cousin and I right in assuming that if some situation could be found for you, the duties of which would not be onerous, which would bring you into contact with 'good' people, and which might open up for you a channel to something far better in the future, you would not be unwilling, after due consideration, to accept it?"

Gerald hesitated. With the knowledge that ten thousand pounds would fall into his pocket in the course of a few days, he might well pause before answering such a question.

"Really, Miss Deane, you quite take me by surprise. I have led a vagabond existence for so many years that the idea of a situation of any kind that would at all cramp that freedom of action to which I have been so long used, and which has become so sweet to me, could not but be somewhat distasteful. Still, if I ever do intend to settle down into a respectable member of the community, it is quite time I began to think of doing so, and the picture just drawn by you is not without its allurements. You will not, therefore, I hope, think me presumptuous if I ask you to favour me with a few more particulars."

"I will be quite candid in the matter with you," said Olive. "The situation to which I refer is that of amanuensis and secretary to Sir Thomas Dudgeon, the newly-elected member for Pembridge. My cousin has the management of Sir Thomas's affairs, and has been asked to find some one suitable for the situation in question."

Gerald was at a loss what to say. The mention of Sir Thomas's name at once brought to his mind what Miss Bellamy had told him—how Eleanor Lloyd had been taken up by Lady Dudgeon, was now living with the family, and was to go to London with them when they moved there for the season. But how would all that be when Miss Lloyd should be proved to be penniless?

"You hesitate," said Olive after a few moments. "You hardly know whether to say Yes or No."

"You are right—I don't," said Gerald frankly. "At the same time, my warmest thanks are due to you and Mr. Kelvin for thinking of me in the way you have."

"Take time to think over what I have said. Don't give me an answer now. Suppose you either call and see me, or let me have a

line from you by to-morrow morning. Or shall you want a still longer time before making up your mind?"

"Thanks," said Gerald with a laugh; "but till to-morrow will be quite long enough."

"Matthew mentioned something to me of the conversation that passed between you and him," said Olive with a smile. "He told me of his suggestion that you should elevate your fortunes by marrying an heiress."

"It was very unfair on Kelvin's part to tell tales out of school."

"But seriously, why should you not marry an heiress?"

"Seriously, I know of no reason why I should not, except this—that all the ladies with whom I have the happiness of being acquainted are very little better off than myself."

"Should you agree to become Sir Thomas Dudgeon's secretary, you will have an opportunity while under his roof of ingratiating yourself with a veritable heiress."

"Come, come—the plot is thickening fast," said Gerald, and he hitched his chair a little nearer Miss Deane.

"Yes, a veritable heiress, young and charming into the bargain, and one whose affections, I have every reason to believe, are totally disengaged."

"Pardon me for saying so," said Gerald, "but it seems highly improbable to me that any relative of Sir Thomas Dudgeon would condescend to look upon that gentleman's secretary in the light of a suitor for her hand."

"The lady in question is no relative of Sir Thomas: she is merely a visitor under his roof; but a visitor who will probably stay there till a husband shall take her away to a home of her own. Why should not you be that husband, Mr. Pomeroy?"

"Why not, indeed! But would it be a breach of confidence if you were to tell me the lady's name?"

"It would be no breach of confidence," said Olive, "although it was not my intention to reveal to you the lady's name at present. However, having been frank with you so far, I may as well continue to be so. The lady to whom I refer is Miss Eleanor Lloyd, of course a perfect stranger to you. Her father died a few months ago and left her twenty thousand pounds."

All Gerald's self-control was needed to keep him from betraying himself to the pair of keen eyes that were fixed so steadily on him. He turned his head away and affected to be deeply considering the words he had just heard. He wanted time to recover himself.

Up to a few moments ago, not the slightest suspicion had entered his mind that the offer which Kelvin had made him through Miss Deane had sprung from anything but a feeling of genuine friendship on the lawyer's part; and even when Olive had propounded her theory that he

ought to recoup his fortunes by marrying an heiress, he had looked upon it as so much quiet chaff on her part, never thinking that any serious meaning was attached to her words. But the mention of Eleanor Lloyd's name had changed all this. Suddenly he seemed to see a pitfall at his feet. His mind, ever active in moments of emergency, at once whispered certain questions to him, not one of which he could answer to his own satisfaction. What object had Kelvin in view in offering to procure for a man whom he knew only as a nameless adventurer a situation of trust and responsibility in the house of such a man as Sir Thomas Dudgeon? What object had Olive Deane in view in trying to persuade this same nameless adventurer to make love to and win the hand of Eleanor Lloyd? Was it with Kelvin's knowledge and sanction that Miss Deane was thus trying to persuade him? or was she doing it merely in furtherance of some hidden scheme of her own? Was Miss Deane aware, as Kelvin undoubtedly was, that Eleanor was not the heiress people believed her to be, nor any relation of Jacob Lloyd; and if so, what could her object possibly be in trying to bring Jack Pomeroy and Miss Lloyd together? Finally, came the oft-recurring questions: Why had not Kelvin written to him as Gerald Warburton, the real heir; and why had he neglected to reveal the contents of the sealed packet to Eleanor? There seemed to be something under the surface that at present he could in no wise fathom. He could not rid his mind of the suspicion that there was some hidden link of connection between the concealment of the sealed packet by Kelvin and the evident desire of Olive Deane that he should win Eleanor for his wife. And yet how could there be any such link of connection? In any case, he would meet stratagem with stratagem. It should be a case of diamond cut diamond. He would still be Jack Pomeroy to them, and would seem, for a little while at least, to fall in with all their views and wishes.

"Really, Miss Deane," he said at last, "you have piqued my curiosity in the strangest possible way. I hardly know in what terms to answer you. The position of this Miss Lloyd, who is so far above me in the social scale, would seem to render utterly absurd and Quixotic on my part any advances that I might make with the view of ultimately winning her hand."

"Of course, if you are lacking in boldness and audacity," said Miss Deane, with the faintest possible sneer, "those are qualities which no one can lend you for the occasion, and the sooner we bring our interview to an end the better. But if it is simply means—that you are short of funds for carrying on the campaign, you need be under no apprehension on that score. Pardon me for speaking so plainly, but my cousin gave me to understand that you were not one of the richest of individuals: he insinuated, in fact, that you were almost penniless."

"Not for the first time in my life, Miss Deane—in fact, I rather like

being penniless: it keeps the circle of one's friends and acquaintances so limited and select."

"To begin with—my cousin Matthew must lend you fifty pounds."

"Fifty pounds! I like the first item of your programme vastly."

"The first necessity in your case is that you should have the dress and appearance of a gentleman."

"I quite agree with you, Miss Deane. We owe much to our tailor—in the way of gratitude."

"I have said nothing to you respecting your friends and connections. I have assumed all along that you would be able to satisfy Sir Thomas on those points, should he ever choose to question you respecting them—which I don't for one moment think that he will do."

"On the points you speak of, I do not doubt that I could satisfy either Sir Thomas Dudgeon or anyone else."

"Such being the case, and with the manners, dress, and appearance of a gentleman, it seems to me that you would have the campaign almost entirely in your own hands. You would be under the same roof with Miss Lloyd—an inestimable advantage in your case. You would be in the habit of seeing her daily, and might make yourself agreeable to her in many ways. Under such circumstances, where would be the harm if, now and then, you were to hint vaguely at your expectations—at your rich relations—at your fashionable friends? Neither would you altogether omit an occasional mention of your undergraduate days at Cambridge, nor of your travels abroad."

"My dear Miss Deane, you might safely leave all the delicate little details, all the nuances of the picture, to me."

"I am quite sure of that. Miss Lloyd is nothing but a simple, country-bred girl: you are a man of the world. *Voilà tout.*"

Gerald rose.

"I may just mention this," said Olive: "Miss Lloyd being over age, she is entirely her own mistress, and can give her hand, and her twenty thousand pounds with it, to the man she likes best, and no one has the right or power to say her nay."

"Kelvin himself could not have stated the case more clearly

"You will let me hear from you, Mr. Pomeroy, by to-morrow morning at the latest?"

"There will be no need for you to wait till to-morrow morning, Miss Deane."

"Does that mean that you have made up your mind already?"

"It does."

"And the answer is——?"

"The answer is, that if Matthew Kelvin can obtain this situation for me, I will gladly accept it. To tell the truth, I am somewhat tired of the nomadic sort of life that I have been leading since I was quite a lad. I think I am sufficiently tamed to settle quietly down to work—

provided there is not too much of it, and I am allowed to have pretty much my own way."

"Any person who chooses to assert himself, can have his own way with Sir Thomas Dudgeon. I am glad that you have decided to accept the position. I feel quite sure that you will have no cause to regret doing so."

"It is you who have persuaded me. I feel sure that Kelvin would not have succeeded as you have."

"Don't forget what I have told you about Miss Lloyd."

"I am not at all likely to do so. I am all anxiety to see her."

"When do you go back to town?"

"This afternoon, by the five o'clock express."

"You will leave me an address before you go, by means of which my cousin can communicate with you. You may expect to hear from him in a week at the latest."

Gerald pencilled down the address of a London friend, to which any letters for him might be sent. A few minutes later he took his leave.

This conversation it was that Mr. Piper thought it worth his while to take down in shorthand.

"My cousin Matthew's revenge shall be worthy of the name," said Olive to herself, as soon as she was alone. "Let this Eleanor Lloyd but engage herself to Pomeroy—let her marry him if she will—and on the day that Matthew tells her the secret of her birth, he can tell her also that the man to whom she has given her heart is but a sorry impostor, whose sole object in marrying her was to obtain possession of that money which is hers no longer. When that day comes, may I be there to see! Her proud beauty shall be humiliated to the dust."

When Gerald got back to London, he told Miss Bellamy everything that had happened. She quite concurred with him that it looked very much as if some strange conspiracy were afoot; but what the nature and objects of it might be they were altogether at a loss to imagine. In any case, it could do no harm for Gerald to retain his incognito for a little while longer.

A few days later, Gerald received by post a bank-note for fifty pounds, with Miss Deane's compliments. Mr. Kelvin had not yet got back home, she wrote, but would doubtless communicate with Mr. Pomeroy immediately after his return. Mr. Pomeroy pinned one note to the other, and having sealed them up in an envelope, he put them carefully away in his writing-desk.

A day or two later, Ambrose Murray called upon him at his rooms. "If you have nothing better to do," he said, "I wish you would give up the day to me. I want to visit my wife's grave. She lies among some of her own people in a little country churchyard, about a couple

of miles from Welwyn. To me such a journey seems quite a formidable undertaking, and I want you, if you will, to go with me."

Gerald at once assented. They took the train from King's Cross to Welwyn, and then walked the remainder of the distance. When the churchyard was found, Gerald left Mr. Murray to himself for half an hour. It was still broad daylight when they got back to the station. They were pacing the platform slowly, waiting for their train, when the up express came rushing past at the rate of forty miles an hour. They stood for a moment to watch it. Suddenly Ambrose Murray gripped his companion by the arm. "Look! look!" he cried. "That's the man! As I live, that's the face of Max Jacoby!"

Gerald looked, but already the train had gone too far to allow him to distinguish any particular face.

"But after twenty years?" said Gerald.

"I should know him at the end of a thousand years!" exclaimed Murray, his whole frame trembling with excitement. "Max Jacoby is still among the living. The next thing to do is to find him."

(*To be continued.*)

ONLY A CHILD.

JUST a picture of somebody's child—
Sweet face set in its golden hair,
Violet eyes, and cheeks of rose,
Rounded chin, with a dimple there;

Tender eyes where the shadows sleep,
Lit from within by a secret ray;
Tender eyes that will shine like stars
When love and womanhood come this way;

Scarlet lips with a story to tell—
Blessed be he who shall find it out!
Who shall learn the eyes' deep secret well,
And read the heart with never a doubt.

Then you will tremble, scarlet lips;
Then you will crimson, loveliest cheeks;
Eyes will brighten and blushes will burn
When the one true lover bends and speaks.

But she's only a child now, as you see,
Only a child in her careless grace;
When love and womanhood come this way
Will anything sadden the flower-like face?

MARGARET RYMER.

THEY had gone through the snow to evening service at North Crabb, the Squire, Mrs. Todhetley, and Tod, leaving me at home with one of my splitting headaches. Thomas had come in to ask if I would have the lamp, but I told him I would rather be without it. So there I sat on alone, beside the fire, listening to Hannah putting the children to bed upstairs, and looking sleepily out at the snowy landscape.

As the fire became dim, sending the room into gloom, the light outside grew stronger. The moon was high; clear and bright as crystal: what with that, and the perfectly white snow that lay on everything, the night seemed nearly as light as day. The grass plat outside was a smooth white plain, the clustering shrubs beyond it being also white.

The room grew darker, the landscape lighter. Asleep, in another minute, I should inevitably have been, but for a circumstance that suddenly arose. All in a moment—I saw not how or whence it came—a dark figure appeared on the grass plat, close before the bank of shrubs, right in front of me; the figure of a man, wrapped in a big great-coat. He was standing still and gazing fixedly at the house. Gazing, as it seemed (though that was impossible) at *me*. I was wide awake at once and sitting bolt upright in the chair.

Yes, there could be no mistake; and it was no delusion. The man was a tall man, strong and bony, with a mass of hair on his face. What could he want? Was it a robber reconnoitring the premises; peering and peeping to ascertain whether all the world was at church before he broke in to rifle the house?

No one, void of such an experience, can imagine how dark he looked, standing there, amid the whiteness of all the scene around. In one sense, he stood out more plainly than he could have done by daylight, because the contrast was greater. But this kind of light did not show his features: which were shrouded in obscurity.

Presently he moved. His head went this way and that, and he took a step forward. Evidently he was trying to see whether the parlour where I sat was empty or occupied. Should I go out to him? Or should I fling up the window and call out to ask what he wanted. I was not frightened: don't let anybody think that: but the watching him brought to me rather a creepy kind of sensation.

As I left the chair quietly to open the window, I heard the catch of the garden gate, and somebody came whistling up the path. The man vanished as if by magic. While I looked, he was gone.

"Anybody at home?" called out Tom Coney, as he stopped his whistling and opened the hall door.

"All right, Tom. Come along."

And, to tell the truth, I was not sorry to see Tom's hearty face. He had stayed away from evening service to sit with his mother.

"I say, Tom, did you see any fellow on the snow there?"

"On the snow where?" asked Tom.

"There; close before the shrubs." And I told him what had happened. Tom, one of the most practical fellows living, with less imagination than an ostrich, received the account incredulously.

"You dropped asleep, Johnny, and fancied it."

"I did not drop asleep, and I did not fancy it. When you came into the garden I was about to open the window and call to him."

"Those headaches are downright stupefying things, Johnny. Jane has them, you know. One day, I remember, she fell asleep with a bad one, and woke up and said the sofa was on fire."

"Tom, I tell you, the man was there. A tall, strong-looking fellow with a beard. He was staring at the house with all his might—at this room, as it seemed to me, wanting to come forward, I think, but afraid to. He kept close to the laurels, as if he did not wish to be seen; forgetting, perhaps, that they were white and betrayed him. When you opened the gate, he was there."

"It's odd, then, where he could have put himself," said Tom Coney, not giving in an inch. "I'll vow not a soul was there, man or woman, when I came up the path."

"That's true. He vanished in a moment. While I was looking at him he disappeared."

"Vanished! Disappeared! Your words apply to a ghost, Johnny."

"Ghost be hanged! It was some ill-doing tramp, I expect, trying to look and see if he might steal into the house."

"Much you know of the ways of tramps, Johnny Ludlow! Tramps don't come showing themselves on snow-lighted, open lawns, in the face and eyes of the front windows. They hide themselves in obscure hedges and by-ways. It's a case of headachy sleep, young man."

"Look here, Tom. If the man was there, his footprints will be there; if he was not, as you say, the snow will be smooth and level: come out and see."

We went out at once, Tom catching up a stick in the hall, and crossed the lawn. Sure enough, there were the footprints, plenty of them, indented in the deep snow. Tom gave in then.

"I wish to goodness I had seen him! The fellow should not have got off scot-free, I can tell him that. What tremendous feet he must have! Just look at the size, Johnny. Regular crushers."

"Don't you go and say again I was asleep! He must have stepped

back and got away through these laurels: here are the marks. I say, Tom"—dropping my voice to a whisper—"perhaps he's here now."

"We'll soon see that," said Tom Coney, plunging amid the laurels with a crash, and beating about with the stick.

But there was no trace of him, and we went in: Tom veering round partly to his first opinion, in spite of the footprints.

"If any man was there, Johnny, how did he get away? I don't see, for my part, what he could possibly want. A thief would have gone to work in a different manner."

"Well, let it go so. I shall say nothing about it to them when they come home. Mrs. Todhetley's timid, you know; she'd fancy the man was outside still, and be lying awake all night, listening for the smashing-in of doors and windows."

Cracking the fire into a blaze, I called Thomas to light the lamp and shut the shutters. When told of the affair, bidding him not mention it, he took a different view of it altogether, and put it down to the score of one of the younger maid-servants.

"They've got sweethearts, Master Johnny, the hussies have; lots of sweethearts. One or other of 'em is always a sidling sheep-faced up to the house, as though he didn't dare to call his legs his own."

Nothing more was said about the man; I and Tom Coney—who stayed supper—held our tongues, as agreed upon. But I told Tod in going up to bed. He was sleepy, and did not think much of it. When related, it did not seem to be much. They had not seen it.

Timberdale Rectory was a cozy, old-fashioned house, its front walls covered with ivy, and standing by itself amid pasture land, a field's length from the church. Mrs. Todhetley sent me there on the Monday morning, to invite the rector, Herbert Tanerton, and his wife to dine with us the next evening off a prime cod-fish from London. The Squire and Tod had gone out shooting. It was January weather; cold and bright, with a frosty sky. Icicles drooped from the trees, and the snow in Crabb ravine was above my ankles. The mater had said, "I should go the road-way, Johnny:" but I did not mind the snow.

In Timberdale I met Margaret Rymer. She had her black cloak and bonnet on; and the gentle and refined face, with its mild brown eyes, put me more than ever in mind of her dead father.

I daresay nobody remembers her. But I told something about her and her people a long while ago. Thomas Rymer, a gentleman born, but who was kept down by circumstances and never got on to pass for a surgeon, had kept the druggist shop at Timberdale. His wife was just as vulgar as he was refined; and they had two children: Benjamin, who followed his mother in looks, and turned out not over well; and Margaret, who was like her father. When Thomas Rymer died, partly of cold on the chest, partly of a broken heart, Margaret

continued to keep the business going. She understood the drugs thoroughly. During the ten months, or so, that had elapsed since, the son had not made his appearance at home: Timberdale would say, "Why does not Benjamin come back to carry on the business in his father's place?" but it got no satisfactory answer. Latterly, Timberdale had let Benjamin alone, and busied itself with Margaret.

Some six months ago, the Reverend Isaac Sale had come to Timberdale as curate. He was an abrupt, dark little man of sterling worth, and some thirty years of age—older than the Rector. Margaret Rymer met him at the Sunday-school, where she taught regularly, and he fell desperately in love with her—if it's not wrong to say that of a parson. In position she was not his equal; but Mr. Sale made no secret that he wanted Margaret to be his wife. Mrs. Rymer opposed it: How was the business to be kept going without Margaret, she demanded; or herself either?

Mr. Sale had taken the curacy as only a temporary thing. He was waiting for some expected appointment abroad. When it fell, Margaret Rymer would have to choose between sailing with him as his wife, or staying at home and giving him up for good. So said Timberdale.

After standing to talk a bit with Margaret, who was out, she said, on an errand for her mother, I ran on to the rectory. Mr. Tanerton and his wife were in the snug little bow-windowed front room. He, spare and colourless, young, yet with cold grey eyes and thin light whiskers, sat by the blazing fire of wood and coal, that went roaring and sparkling up the chimney. Somehow Herbert Tanerton gave you the idea of being always in a chill. Intending to be kind in the main, he was yet severe, taking too much note of offences, and expecting all the world, and especially his own flock, to be better than gold.

Grace, his wife, kind, genial, and open-hearted, sat at the window, stitching a wristband for some one or other of her husband's shirts—he was as particular over *them* as he was over the parish sins—and glancing cheerfully out between whiles at the snowy landscape. She was a capable woman, rather tall and slender, with bright, dark hazel eyes, and a wide mouth that seemed always to be smiling to show its pretty white teeth. Seeing me coming, she ran to open the porch door. They had no children.

"Come in, Johnny! Is it not a lovely day? Herbert thinks it the coldest morning we have had. But he has been put out a little."

"What about?" I asked, as the Rector turned in his chair to shake hands with me.

"Mr. Sale is going to leave," said she, as I sat down by the table. "The appointment he expected has been offered to him; it is a chaplaincy at the Bahama Islands. Mr. Sale has known of it for a week, and never told Herbert until yesterday."

"He spoke to me in the vestry after morning service," said the

Rector, in an injured tone. "And he said at the same time that he was not sure he should accept it; it did not quite depend upon himself. I saw as clearly what he meant to imply, as though he had avowed it: that it depended upon that girl, Margaret Rymer. It is a preposterous thing. The idea of a clergyman and a gentleman wanting to marry *her!* She keeps a chemist's shop!"

"It was her father who kept it," I said, for I liked Margaret, and did not care to hear her disparaged. "And he was a gentleman born."

"What has that to do with it?" retorted the parson, who was in one of his touchy humours. "Had her grandfather been a duke, it would make no difference to what she is. Look at the mother!"

"Margaret is a lady in mind, and looks, and manners," I persisted. "If I loved Margaret Rymer I would marry her, though I were an archdeacon."

"That's just like you, Johnny Ludlow: you have no more sense than a child in some things," said the parson crustily. Grace laughed; and looked as if she would like to take part with me.

"I never could have suspected Sale of such folly," went on the Rector, leaning sideways to warm his hands over the blaze. "Grace, do you think that soup 's ready?"

"I will see," answered Grace, putting the wristband down.

Herbert Tanerton sat in silence; knitting his brow into lines. I took the chair on the other side the fireplace opposite to him, thinking of this and that, and fingering the tongs to help me. A habit I was often scolded for at home—that of fingering things.

"Look here, Mr. Tanerton: If they settle at the Bahamas, it will not signify there who Margaret has been here. Whether she may have helped in her father's business, or whether she may have been—as you said—a duke's grand-daughter, and brought up accordingly, it will be all one to the Bahamas. Mr. Sale need not say to the Bahamas, 'My wife used to sell pennyworths of rhubarb and magnesia.'"

"It is not that," crossly responded the Rector—"what people will think or say: it is for Sale's own sake that I object. He cannot like the connection. A clergyman should marry in his own sphere."

"I suppose men are differently constituted, clergymen as well as others," said I with deprecation, remembering that I was a plain, inexperienced lad, and he was the Rector of Timberdale. "Some persons don't care for social distinctions as others do—don't even see them: perhaps Mr. Sale is one."

"He cares for probity and honour—he would not choose to ally himself to crime," sternly spoke the Rector. Remember what the son did, that ill-doing Benjamin! You know about it, Johnny. The affair of the bank-note."

And if Herbert Tanerton had said to me the affair of the moon and

planets, I could not have been more surprised. "How did you get to know of it?" I asked.

"Mr. Rymer told me on his death-bed. I was attending him spiritually. Of course, I have never spoken of it, even to my wife; I should not think of speaking of it: but I consider that it lies in my duty to disclose the facts to Mr. Sale."

"Oh, no, don't—don't, please, Mr. Tanerton!" I cried out, starting up in a sort of distress, for the words seemed to take hold of me. "No one knows of it: no one but the Squire, and I, as you say, and Mrs. Rymer, and you, and Ben himself: Jelf's dead, you know. It need never be brought up again in this world; and I daresay it never will be. Pray don't tell Mr. Sale—for Margaret's sake."

"But I have said that I consider it my duty to tell him," replied the parson, steadily. "Here he comes!"

I turned to the window, and saw Sale trudging up to the parsonage through the snowy field pathway, his black hair, and red, rugged face presenting a kind of contrast to the white glare around. Ugly, he might be called; but it was a face to be liked, for all that. And the ring of his voice was true and earnest.

The affair, alluded to by the Rector, was this. Ben Rymer, who had received a classical and fairly liberal education, had been intended for a surgeon. To give him a knowledge of the properties of drugs and medicines, Mr. Rymer had first put him behind his own counter at Timberdale, and then placed him with a chemist at Tewkesbury. There Ben fell into bad companionship. Later, when he was again staying at home, he visited the letter-bag one night (Mr. Rymer was then the postmaster of Timberdale), opened a letter that was addressed to Mrs. Todhetley, took out the five-pound note it contained (and which he chanced to know was there) and substituted another for it. This other was a note stolen at Tewkesbury by some of Ben's companions; they had given it to him to get rid of, and that's the way he did it. For some time the changing of the notes was enveloped in fog; or, as Thomas Rymer himself expressed it, in a sea of mystery; later, Ben's share in it came out. Not to the world in general; only to one or two items of its people. It helped to kill Thomas Rymer, and it sent Mr. Ben off on his wanderings again. It was a bit of ill-luck for him, for he had really pulled up, was reading hard at his medical books, and become as steady as could be. Never, since then—some ten months ago now—had Ben been heard of. And it was this that Herbert Tanerton was now threatening to disclose to the curate. But I did not think he'd do it.

"We were just talking of you," was the Rector's greeting to Mr. Sale as the curate came into the room. "Bring a chair to the front of the fire: Johnny, keep your seat. I'm sure it's cold enough to make one wish to be in the fire to-day, instead of round it."

"What were you saying about me?" asked Mr. Sale, drawing forward the chair, and giving me a nod in his short way. "I came to tell you how ill Jael Batty is. I'm not sure she'll get over it."

"Oh," said the Rector, in a slighting tone, as if Jael Batty had no right to intrude herself into more momentous conversation. "Batty is careless and indifferent in her duties, and makes her deafness an excuse for not coming to church. I'll try to see her in the course of the day. We were speaking of Miss Rymer."

Herbert Tanerton, I believe, had people's welfare at heart: but he had a cold way of saying things that seemed to take all the kindness out of his words. If once he considered it was his duty to tell a fellow of his faults, tell he did, face to face, in the most uncompromising manner. He had decided that his duty lay with Mr. Sale, to-day, and he began to hold forth without ceremony. The curate did not seem to be in the least put out but talked back again, quietly and freely. I sat balancing the tongs over the fender, and listening.

"Miss Rymer is not my equal, you say," observed Sale. "I don't know that. Her father was a curate's son: I am a curate's son. Circumstances, it would seem, kept Mr. Rymer down in the world. Perhaps they will keep me down: I cannot tell."

"But you are a gentleman in position, a clergyman: Rymer served customers," retorted Mr. Tanerton, harping upon that bête noire of his, the chemist's shop. "Can't you perceive the difference? A gentleman ought to be a gentleman."

"Thomas Rymer was a gentleman, as I hear, in mind and manners and conduct; educated, courteous, and ——"

"He was one of the truest gentlemen I ever met," I could not help putting in, though it interrupted the curate. "For my part, when speaking with him, I forgot the counter."

"And a true Christian, I was about to say," added Mr. Sale.

"Your acceptance of this chaplaincy depends upon Miss Rymer?"

"Yes," said Sale readily. "If she will go with me—my wife—I shall accept it; if she will not, I remain at home."

"Margaret is as nice as her father was," I said. "Were I you, Mr. Sale, I should just take her out of the place, and end it."

"But if she won't come with me," said he with a half smile.

"She is wanted at home," observed Herbert Tanerton, casting a severe look at me with his cold light eyes. Sale interposed.

"The son should be at home to attend to things. It is his place to be, not his sister's. He is inclined to be wild, it is said, and is given to roving."

"Wildness is not Benjamin Rymer's worst fault, or roving either," cried the Rector in his hardest voice, though he dropped it to a low key. And forthwith he opened the ball, and told the unfortunate story in a very few words. I let fall the tongs with a clatter.

"I would not have mentioned this," pursued he, "but that I consider it lies in my duty to tell you of it. To anyone else it would never be allowed to pass my lips; it never has passed them since Mr. Rymer disclosed it to me a day or two before he died. Margaret Rymer may be desirable in herself; but there's her position, and—there's *this*. It is for your own sake I have spoken, Mr. Sale."

Sale had sat quiet, while he listened. There was nothing outward to show that the tale affected him, but instinct told me that it *did*. Just a question or two, as to the details, and then he rose to leave.

"Will you not let it sway you?" asked the Rector, perseveringly, as he held out his hand to his curate. And I was sure he thought he had been doing him the greatest good in the world.

"I cannot tell," replied Mr. Sale.

He went out, walked across the garden, and through the gate to the field, with his head down. A dreadful listlessness—as it seemed to me—had taken the place of his brisk bearing. Just for a minute I stood where I was, feeling as though I had had a shower of ice thrown down upon me, and might never be warm again. Saying a short good-morning, I rushed out after him, nearly upsetting Mrs. Tanerton in the hall, and a basin of soup she was carrying in on a plate. How cruel it seemed; how cruel! Why can't people let one another alone? He was half-way across the field when I overtook him.

"Mr. Sale, I want to tell you—I ought to tell you—that the story, as repeated to you, bears a worse aspect than the reality. It is true that Benjamin Rymer did change the note in the letter; but that was all: the best and the worst of it. He had become mixed up with some reckless men, and they persuaded him to get the stolen note changed for a safe one. I am sure he repented of it truly. When he came home later to his father's, he had left all his random ways and bad companions behind him. Nobody could be steadier than he was: kind to Margaret, considerate to his father and mother, attentive to business, and reading hard all his spare time. It was only through an ill fellow hunting him up—one Cotton, who was the man that induced him to play the trick with the note—that he was disturbed again."

"How disturbed?"

"He grew frightened, I mean, and went away. That fellow Cotton deserved hanging. When he found that Ben Rymer would have nothing more to do with him, or with the rest of the bad lot, he, in revenge, told Jelf, the landlord of the Plough and Harrow (where Cotton ran up a score, and decamped without paying), that it was Ben Rymer who had changed the note—for, you see, it had always remained a mystery to Timberdale. Jelf—he is dead now—was foolish enough to let Ben Rymer know what Cotton had said, and Ben made off in alarm. In a week's time, Mr. Rymer was dead. He had been ailing in mind and body for a long while, and the new fear finished him up."

A pause. Sale broke it. "Did Miss Rymer know of this?"

"Of Ben and the bank-note? I don't believe she knows of it, to this hour."

"No, I feel sure she does not," added Sale, speaking more to himself than to me. "She is truth and candour itself; and she has repeatedly said to me she cannot tell why her brother keeps away."

"No one knows of it but Squire Todhetley, and I, and Mr. Tanerton. We should never, never think of bringing it up, any one of us. Mr. Tanerton only spoke of it because he thought he ought to tell you; he will never speak of it again. Indeed, Mr. Sale, you need not fear it will be known. Benjamin Rymer is quite safe."

"What sort of a man is he, this Benjamin?" resumed Sale, halting at the outer gate of the field as we were going through it. "Like the father, or like the mother?"

"Like the mother. But not as vulgar as she is. Ben has been educated; she was not; and though he does take after her, there's a little bit of his father in him as well. Which makes a great difference."

Without another word, Mr. Sale turned abruptly off to the right, as though he were going for a country ramble. I shut the gate, and trudged home through the snow, bearing back the message from the Rector and Grace—that they'd come and help eat the codfish.

The Reverend Isaac Sale was that day sorely exercised in mind. The story shook his equanimity to the centre. To marry a young lady whose brother stood a chance of being prosecuted for felony, looked like a very black prospect indeed; but, on the other hand, Margaret at least was innocent, and he loved and respected her with his whole heart and soul. Not until the evening was his mind made up; he had debated the question with himself in all its bearings (seated on the stump of a snowy tree); and the decision he arrived at, was—to take Margaret all the same. He *could not* leave her.

About nine o'clock he went to Mrs. Rymer's. The house was closed, and Mr. Sale entered by the private door. Margaret sat in the parlour alone, reading; Mrs. Rymer was out. In her soft black dress, with its bit of white frilling at the throat, Margaret did not look anything like her nearly twenty years. Her mild brown eyes, and tale-telling cheeks lighted up at the entrance of the curate.

"I am come this evening to have some final conversation with you, Margaret," he began. "Will you hear me, my dear?"

"You know I am always glad to hear you," she said, in a low, timid tone. And Mr. Sale made no more ado, but turned and kissed her. Then he released her hand, sat down opposite to her on the other side the hearth-rug, and entered on his argument.

It was no other than she had heard from him before—the whole sum and substance of it consisted of representations why he must

accept this chaplaincy at the Bahamas, and why she must accompany him thither. In the midst of it Margaret burst into tears.

"Oh, Isaac, why prolong the pain?" she said. "You know I *cannot* go: to refuse is as painful to me as to you. Don't you see that I have no alternative but to remain here?"

"No: I don't see it," replied Mr. Sale, stoutly. "I think your mother could do without you. She is an active, bustling woman, hardly to be called middle-aged yet. It is not right that you should sacrifice yourself and your prospects in life. At least it seems to me that it is not."

Margaret's hand was covering her face; the silent tears dropped through her fingers.

"It is a week and a day since I told you that the promotion was at length offered me," resumed Mr. Sale, "and we seem to be not any nearer a decision than we were then. I have kept it to myself and said nothing about it abroad, waiting for you, Margaret; and the Rector—to whom I at length spoke yesterday—is angry with me, and says I ought to have told him at once. In three days from this—on Thursday next—I *must* give an answer: accept the post, or throw it up."

Margaret took her hand from her face. Mr. Sale could see how great was the conflict at work within her.

"There is nothing to wait for, Isaac. I wish there was. You must go by yourself, and leave me."

"I have told you that I will not. If you stay here, I stay."

"Oh, pray don't do that! It would be so intense a disappointment!"

"The greatest disappointment I have ever had in life," he answered. "You must go with me."

"I wish I could! I wish I could! But it is impossible. My duty lies here, Isaac. I wish you could see that it does as strongly as I see it. My poor father always enjoined me to do my duty, no matter at what personal cost."

"It is your brother's duty to be here, Margaret; not yours. Where is he?"

"In London, I believe," she replied; and a faint colour flew into her pale face. She put up her handkerchief to hide it.

It had come to Margaret's knowledge that during the past few months her mother had occasionally written to Benjamin. But Mrs. Rymer would not allow Margaret to write, or give her his address. It chanced, however, that about a fortnight ago Mrs. Rymer incautiously left a letter on the table, addressed to him, and her daughter saw it. When, some three or four days subsequently, Mr. Sale received the offer of the chaplaincy, and laid it and himself before Margaret, urging her to accompany him, saying that he could not go without her, she took courage to write to Benjamin. She did not ask him to return

and release her; she only asked him whether he had any intention of returning; and, if so, when: and she gave him in simple words the history of her acquaintanceship with Mr. Sale, and said that he wanted her to go out with him to the Bahamas. To this letter Margaret had not received any answer. She therefore concluded that it had either not reached her brother, or else that he did not mean to return at all to Timberdale: and so she gave up all hopes of it.

"Life is not very long, Margaret, and God has placed us in it to do the best we can in all ways; for Him first, for social obligations afterwards. But He has not meant it to be all trial, all self-denial. If you and I part now, the probability is that we part for ever. Amid the world's chances and changes we may never meet again, howsoever much our wills might prompt it."

"True," she faintly answered.

"And I say that you ought not to enforce this weighty penance upon me and yourself. It is for your brother's sake, as I look upon it, that you are making the sacrifice, and it is he, not you, who ought to be here. Why did he go away?"

"I never knew," said Margaret, lifting her truthful face to her lover's. "Benjamin was at home, and so steady and good as to be a comfort to papa; when quite suddenly he left without giving a reason. Papa seemed to be in trouble about it—it was but a few days before he died—and I have thought that, perhaps, poor Benjamin was unexpectedly called upon to pay some debt or other, and could not find the money to do it. He had ——"

A loud bang of the entrance door, and a noisy burst into the room, proclaimed the return of Mrs. Rymer. Her mass of scarlet curls garnished her face on either side, like a couple of drooping bushes, looking particularly incongruous with her widow's cap and bonnet. Mr. Sale, rising to hand her a chair, explained that he was asking Margaret to make her decision.

"It has been made," returned Mrs. Rymer, disregarding the offered chair, and standing to hold her boots, one after the other, to the fire. "Margaret can't go, Mr. Sale, and you know it."

"But I wish her to go: and she wishes it."

"It's a puzzle to me what on earth you can see in her," cried Mrs. Rymer, flinging her grey muff on the table, and untying her black bonnet-strings to tilt the bonnet half-way off her head. "Margaret won't have any money. Not a penny piece."

"I am not thinking about money," replied the curate; who somehow could never keep his temper long in the presence of this strong-minded Amazon. "It is Margaret that I want; not money."

"And it's Margaret, then, that you can't have," she retorted. "Who is to keep the shop on if she leaves it?—it can't go to rack and ruin."

"I see you serving in it yourself sometimes."

"Just so.—Is he a good fellow, this parson?"

"Good inside. Not much to look at."

"Maggie shall go with him, then. I should be the last to stand willingly in her way. You see, I have not known whether it was safe for me at Timberdale: or I should never have left Maggie to the shop alone. Does anyone know of the past—my past—besides you and the Squire?"

"Yes, Herbert Tanerton knows of it; and—and the curate, Mr. Sale. And I told him what had passed only on the previous day." Ben's mouth fell as he listened.

"It is another mortification for me," he said. "I should like to have stood as well as might be with Margaret's husband. Perhaps knowing this, he will not think more of her."

"I don't believe he will let it make any difference. I don't think he is the man to let it. Perhaps—if you were to go to him?—and show him how straight things are with you now?—and ——"

I broke down in my hesitating suggestion. Ben was years older than I, miles taller and broader, and it sounded like the mouse attempting to help the lion.

"Yes, I will go to him," he said slowly. "It is the only plan. And —and you think there's no fear of Herbert Tanerton?"

"I'm sure there's none. He is indoors now, dining with us. I am sure you are quite safe in all respects. Lee, you know, the old postman, thinks it was Cotton: the Squire persuaded him into the belief at the time. Where *is* Cotton?"

"Where all such rogues deserve to be—transported. But for him and his friends, I should never have gone much wrong. Thank you for the encouragement you give."

He half put out his hand, to endorse the thanks, and drew it back again; but I put mine freely into his. Ben Rymer *was* Ben Rymer, and no favourite of mine to boot; but when a man has been down and is trying to get up again, he deserves respect and sympathy.

"I was about here all last evening, hoping to get sight of you," he remarked, as he went out at the gate. "I never saw such light nights in all my life as these few last have been, what with the moon and the snow. Good-night, Mr. Johnny."

Ben Rymer went striding towards Timberdale, and arrived at the curate's lodgings. Mr. Sale was at home. Ben sat down by him, and made a clean breast of everything: his temptation, his fall, and his later endeavours to do right.

"Please God, I shall get on in the world now," he said; "and, I think, make a name in my profession. I don't wish to boast—and time of course will alone prove it—but I believe I have a special aptitude for surgery. My mother will be my care now; and Margaret —as you are good enough to say you still wish for her—shall be your care in future. There are few girls so deserving as she is."

"I know that," said the curate. And he shook Ben's hand upon it as heartily as though it had been a duke royal's.

It was close upon ten when Ben left him. Mrs. Rymer about that same time was making her usual preparations before retiring—namely putting her curls in paper by the parlour fire. Margaret sat at the table, reading the Bible in silence, and so trying to school her aching heart. Her mother had been cross and trying all the evening.

"What are you crying for?" suddenly demanded Mrs. Rymer, her sharp eyes seeing a tear fall on the book.

"Eor nothing," faintly replied Margaret.

"*Nothing!* Don't tell me. You are frizzling your bones over that curate Sale. I'm sure *he's* a beauty to look at!"

Margaret made no rejoinder: and just then a loud ring came to the outer door. Such late summonses were not unusual; they generally meant a prescription to be made up. While the maid went to the door, Margaret closed the Bible, dried her eyes, and rose up to be in readiness.

But instead of a prescription, there entered Mr. Benjamin Rymer. His mother stood up, staring, her hair a mass of white corkscrews. Ben clasped Margaret in his arms and kissed her heartily.

"My goodness *me!*" cried Mrs. Rymer. "Is it you, Ben?"

"Yes, it is, mother," said Ben, turning to her. "Maggie, dear ——"

"But what on earth have you come for—in this startling way?" demanded Mrs. Rymer. "I don't believe your bed's aired."

"I'll sleep between the blankets—the best place to-night. What have I come for, you ask, mother; I have come home to stay."

Margaret was gazing at him, her mild eyes wide open, a spot of hectic on either cheek.

"For your sake, Maggie," he whispered, putting his arm round her waist, and bending his great red head (but not so red as his mother's) down on her. "I shan't much like to lose you, though, my little sister. The Bahamas are further off than I could have wished."

And, for answer, poor Margaret, what with one thing and another, sank quietly down in her chair, and fainted. Ben strode into the shop —as much at home amid the bottles as though he had never quitted them—and came back with some sal volatile.

They were married in less than a month. The Rector was ailing as usual, or said he was, and Charles Ashton came over to perform the ceremony. Margaret was in plain things: they were to go away from the church door, and the boxes were already at the station. Ben gave her away, dressed well, for once, and there was no bridesmaid. And after a day or two spent in the seaport town they were to sail from, regaling their eyes with the ships crowding the water, the Reverend Isaac Sale and his wife embarked for their future home in the Bahama Islands.]

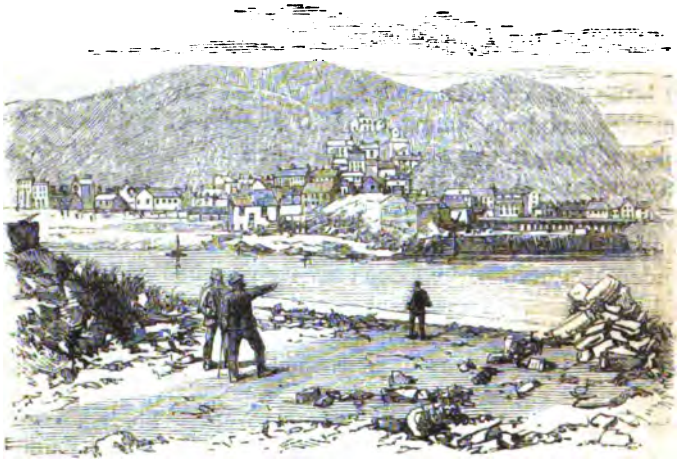
JOHNNY LUDLOW.

ROUND ABOUT BARMOUTH

BY THE AUTHOR OF "A WELSH RAMBLE."

THERE are seven wonders of the world; and there are said to be seven wonders in Wales; but as in this sketch we shall catch a glimpse of two of them at the utmost, we will spare the reader the trouble of reading down the list of these marvels.

Let us at once commence our long journey from Paddington to Barmouth. We started at ten o'clock. The journey up to Ruabon was pleasant, and even rapid. The scenery down the line, we all know, is altogether picturesque, rising here and there into the utmost pastoral



BARMOUTH.

beauty. But exception must be made to that one spot which has planted itself upon the face of nature, surely in order that we may the more thoroughly appreciate the beauties that have gone before, and those that, happily, follow after: that one fearful spot—the Black Country. Approaching a large town, whose many chimneys send forth huge volumes of dense smoke, which gather themselves together, and hang in a thick curtain between the earth and the bright sunshine and clear blue sky; where begrimed red-brick houses rise up in melancholy clusters; we have no need to be told that this is Birmingham. Glad to escape, we plunge deeper into the mire, and are whirled through the very thick of the Black Country. When darkness, indeed, envelopes her own, this spot becomes less repelling. Huge fires from many quarters rise up, emitting angry flames and smoke, eminently suggestive of dark and evil deeds; recalling to the mind of those who have

chanced to spend a midsummer night at Linz, by an exquisite comparison, the hundred fires that burst forth on the hill-tops and valleys of the Danube.

As soon as we had quitted Ruabon, and had got clear of its mines —here again we alight on a little bit of Black Country—we entered the valley of Llangollen, with which is ever associated the name of Owain Glendowr; a valley of surpassing beauty: of such beauty that we were fain to forgive the slowness of the train, and ignore the cutting wind. The five miles between Ruabon and Llangollen disclosed at every step a dream of such scenery as is surely not, of its kind, to be surpassed. The capricious River Dee added no little to this charm: a rippling stream, which seemed to delight in winding about, and might be seen now on one side the line, now on the other. By degrees it widened into a running torrent, noisy and shallow, rushing over its bed with a frothy passion that must be infinitely refreshing at midsummer; eddying against great stones that impeded its progress, as if inclined to turn aside its picturesque course. Occasionally it would take a leap downwards of a few feet, and become a miniature cataract or waterfall. Round and about the running water, trees and shrubs of every description grew in abundance and wild beauty, and clothed the hill-sides; whilst the descending sun threw its warm glow (a warmth much needed) over all; gleaming and glinting amidst the leaves, and burnishing with living gold those that were just turning into autumn shades. At Llangollen the whole beauty seemed to reach its culminating point. Here the river widened considerably, though it did not deepen; and was nothing but a scene and succession of small waterfalls, so rocky was its bed, and so uneven. Spanning the river, and adding greatly to the quaint old-fashioned character of the landscape, was the old bridge (one of the seven wonders of Wales) with its low, unequal, pointed arches, built of stone, grey with five centuries of age. The whole scene undoubtedly is a marvellous wonder of nature; but quickly passing, it was difficult to discover anything in the old bridge to entitle it to be considered a wonder of art.

In the valley entered immediately after leaving Llangollen, Owain Glendowr, the Welsh chieftain, is said to have been born, in 1359. As we most of us know, he flourished in the reign of Henry IV., and the monarch had good cause to know it also. Never had Henry, amongst all the plotters and conspirators of his thirteen years' reign, a more troublesome enemy. In 1403 he joined Harry Hotspur at the battle of Shrewsbury; but though the battle terminated in favour of the King, and though Hotspur lost his life, Owain's determined rebellion was not put down. For twelve years longer, warfare raged amongst the Welsh mountains: which proved to Owain Glendowr of greater strength and protection than all the ramparts ever built by man; and then

Owain, who had been conquered by no other enemy, had to yield to his last enemy—Death. In 1415, at the age of sixty-one, he is said to have died peaceably in his bed at the house of one of his daughters.

At length we reached Bala, and continued our journey by the side of its beautiful lake: so close to its borders that, unless actually looking down on a level with the carriage, it seemed as if we were gliding swiftly over the water. From this point is seen one of the finest views of Cader Idris.

Now the mountains became more wild and rugged; more distant; yet colder and keener the wind blew down upon us: more and more I felt as if I were leaving civilization far behind me. Darkness was falling apace, wrapping the mountains in a mysterious gloom and silence, cold and chilling. Hardly was it possible to distinguish the forms of the firs, stretching themselves here and there on the tops of the hills. At length we reached Dolgelly, but its beauties were folded in night. The station was uncomfortably crowded with country people, who gabbled away in their guttural and unknown tongue. They were for the most part heavy and clumsy in appearance: and unless you were careful of your toes, trod upon them with their thick hobnailed boots.

Once clear of Barmouth Junction, we were luckily very near our destination. A few moments more, and the train stopped at Barmouth; we had left London at ten o'clock in the morning: it was now past seven. It was quite dark, and not until the next morning did any of the beauties of Barmouth disclose themselves. That next morning, from the window, might be seen, on the one hand, hills or mountains, stretching themselves far above us, so near as almost to cast their shadows upon the room: and on the other hand, the grand, eternal sea; with small waves, breaking gently upon a long stretch of flat, smooth beach, neither pebbly nor strewn with many shells, but composed chiefly of sand.

The season at Barmouth was over; the place was quiet, the streets were deserted. If during the day a carriage and pair clattered over the stones, it was a startling circumstance. But the chief excitement of the daily hours, so far as the inhabitants were concerned, seemed to be the setting off every morning from a certain Glan-y-mor House (kept by one Mrs. Evans, who ought to be canonized for her disinterested kindness to her lodgers) of a cavalcade consisting of a donkey, two panniers, two small boys in the panniers, two nurses, a baby in long white apparel, and two donkey boys. This cavalcade went flourishing down the quiet streets with whips and sticks, and such a commotion as would not attend my Lord Mayor himself in the highways of London. The shopkeepers rushed to their doors, and gazed after these late visitors at the quiet sea-side place, either in mute admiration of the procession, or in silent hopes of a speedy removal of so disturbing an element in their tame existence: it was difficult to tell which. Not a shop-door

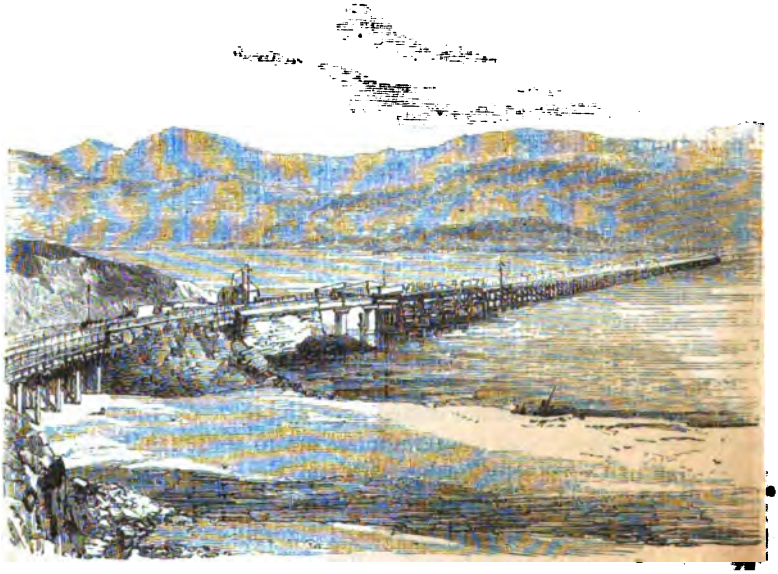
during this royal progress would be untenanted, and for a few moments Barmouth was lively. It was my fate now and then to encounter this cavalcade on my way to the post-office, and all I could do was to salute it with grave respect and back hastily into some sheltering doorway.

To me, fresh from the bustle of London, there was something soothing in the quiet of Barmouth; in the air; in watching the breaking of the waves as they surged monotonously over the sand. Something inexpressibly soothing and calming in patrolling to and fro upon these same sands; now contemplating the hills in their silent majesty; so great, yet so still and immovable; now turning at the end of the beat, to a full view of the sea, ever restless, ever changing. At Barmouth the sea is beautiful in its repose, but monotonous and lifeless. You are able here to realize thoroughly how much the passing ships upon the ocean add to the interest and animation of its vast surface. The sea here is, after all, little more than a bay, confined as it is by the boundary of the distant hills; you grow weary of watching it; weary of longing for a sail, or even the ghost of a boat, though it were but the shade of the Flying Dutchman. Not one was sighted during the whole of my sojourn. Nothing reigned but silence; the silence almost of the grave; upon the water and amongst the surrounding hills. No matter how long I might thus, as it were, stand guard, I had to myself the whole great space and waste. Not a human creature to be seen; not a footprint upon the sand, save those in the track of my dreary beat. Yet it proved, after all, a grateful experience to a restless spirit.

Barmouth itself is primitive in appearance, consisting chiefly of one long street, whilst houses are dotted here and there on the mountains, one above another. But the term mountain to those familiar with the mountains of Germany, with the Alps and the jagged Dolomites, will seem an exaggeration. To mention the commissariat department, for the benefit and enlightenment of those interested in the subject, provisions were admirable in Barmouth. Bread, butter, milk, perfectly pure and unadulterated: beef is somewhat coarse, so that the changes have to be rung upon poultry and mutton, both of which are so unusually excellent, that the easily contented mind found in these a continual feast of sufficient variety. The fresh herrings have a peculiar delicacy of their own which places them above all other herrings of all other places; and the whiting, thanks partly perhaps to the skill of as good as a professed cook, attained the dignity of a delicacy. In these days of adulterated food, this item is one which adds greatly to the comfort of a visit to Barmouth.

Standing on the bridge with your back to the sea, you gaze upon a view hardly to be surpassed for beauty. At your feet the calm waters of the estuary, stretching around you for a great distance, lap the foot of the hills. Around and before you, in the form of an amphitheatre, are the same hills, of all sizes and shapes, with the most waving undula-

tions, stretching far away, tier above tier, one behind another; in position, in grace of form, for their size and kind, matchless. Upon some of the hills still hovers the purple bloom; a bloom the chill winds of October are fast dissipating. To the right, Cader Idris stretches aloft its proud head; to the left, in a distant corner, beside which runs an exquisite valley, you look upon one of the gold mountains; bearing a strange resemblance to the gold mountains of Gastein. Also to the left we catch a glimpse of the grey winding path which leads to Dolgelly. And, oh, horror! at this very moment there is that inevitable cavalcade of donkeys and boys and nursemaids, advancing in full tear as if about to storm the town. Let us linger



PANORAMA BRIDGE.

upon the bridge, in full view of these strangely beautiful hills and hollows, until we are able to escape through the streets in the calm that follows a tempest!

Giving somewhat of life to the scene, and certainly adding to its interest, is the railway bridge itself, upon which we stand to obtain a full view of this grand panorama: a fairy-like structure of extreme length, stretching across the estuary, and connecting Barmouth with the opposite chain of hills; rendering the end of one's journey an easy and pleasant task compared with the old trouble of ferrying across: a trouble removed by an enterprising engineer, who accomplished that which many of the great members of his profession had pronounced impossible. Seen from what point you will, and from whatever distance, the bridge, spanning the water, is beautiful: its foot-

way forming a quiet, solitary, and delightful walk, from whence to the heart's content may be surveyed the beauties of Nature of almost every description: land, sea, mountains, valleys, lake. For the estuary, in its quiet ebb and flow, is calm and unruffled as a lake's surface.

The people, like the town of Barmouth, strike one, at any rate at a first glance, as primitive and unworldlike: peculiarly so, considering how very much the place is sought after, in a quiet way, during the summer months. Almost every shop seemed to be a mixture of at least two trades: stationer and grocer being an invariable combination. Not a few of the sign-boards were a source of amusement. One of the first to be noted ran as follows:

JOHN OWENS.
Tailor.
Also Hair Cutter and Shaver.

Surely under these conditions it cannot take nine Welsh tailors to make a man!

Any unusual event is announced by means of a crier, who announces his presence by a huge brass bell. (In a foreign town sacred to that happy period of life, our childhood's recollections, this important functionary made known his mission with the aid of a huge brass pan; which, struck vigorously with a gong-stick, sent forth a sound as of thunder amidst the elements.) This Barmouth bellman delivers his oration in Welsh; whilst at this deserted season of the year the dogs and cats come out to swell an otherwise very limited audience. One day the cats doubtless were especially interested in the announcement. By chance catching sight of an unfamiliar face at the window, the bellman, with a species of what I can only call Welsh grin, finished his speech in the native, and at once proceeded to deliver it in English with a decidedly Celtic accent, in the following words: "A very large quantity of fine fish and herrings to be sold immediately in the market-place." I was told afterwards on authority I was too polite to question, that no sooner was this announcement given than a whole troop of cats went careering off in a body to the market-hall. If this be true, then must it be that there is a School Board for cats in Wales. And we would, with the utmost deference and humility, bring it under the notice of that admirable Busy-body in England, whether they should not extend a little of their patronage, their philanthropic purposes and plans, and sublime notions, to these soft-coated grimalkins, and give less of it to the cultivation of Taste and the Musical Glasses to their youthful brethren in the gutters?

Would that it were possible to give a minute and detailed description of the neighbourhood of Barmouth. Not a foot of progress would be found uninteresting. Especially remembered is the exceeding beauty of the drive from Barmouth to Dolgelly: even in spite of the day, which was cold, windy, grey, and at times rainy. In this drive

the splendid panorama seen from the railway bridge is before and about you nearly the whole way; the mountains at every moment change form as you drive quickly past them: some of them are yellow with gorse and fern fronds, looking gold mountains indeed; occasionally a glimpse is caught of a small house or church buried in a cleft, reminding one that these apparently deserted places can yet find inhabitants. But what a life they must lead here, or rather a want of life! Shut up from year to year so far out of the world, never hearing perchance of events that shake governments and reorganize kingdoms. Calm and peaceful, indeed, must such lives be in their record. Almost the whole way you have a full view of Cader Idris, the chief mountain in Wales next to Snowdon. This mountain may be climbed

TORRENT WALK, LOWER BRIDGE.

in about three hours; an adventure attended with no danger, and, to a "Muscular Christian," with small fatigue. But as the reader may not have ventured as yet up its mazy height, a sketch of its summit and lake will perhaps not be uninteresting. On the way to Dolgelly you every now and then obtain glimpses of passes and valleys, and long to penetrate their hidden recesses.

A mile beyond Dolgelly is the "Torrent Walk;" a walk beautiful beyond description. Entering at the lower bridge and quitting the carriage, you ascend for about a mile through an enchanted glen. To your left hand is the torrent, rushing between its banks over a steep rocky bed: the banks covered with mosses and ferns and small shrubs that bend over the water as if courting an embrace while it rushes past them. Every here and there the scene is enlivened by an artist, sketching a particularly good bit: the while dreaming no doubt of fame and fortune: and perhaps of a fair form and face, whose happiness is waiting

the realization of these dreams to be consummated. How many of these sketches, I wonder, will find their way to the walls of the Royal Academy of 1875?

During the whole of this walk you are in a wealthy maze of verdure: but verdure now tinted with autumn shades. Gradually ascending, the banks become steeper, the torrent more profound, adding depth and grandeur to the scene. Here and there the torrent takes a leap and becomes quite an angry cataract; and in one or two places five or six such leaps are visible at once. In one spot especially, towards the end of the walk, the view, looking down into the ravine, is grand and magnificent. Above you the trees throw their shady branches; and you look through a long vista of trees and branches, shrubs and ferns, all forming a species of natural bower, in which to dream away the hours of a soft, midsummer night. Amidst it all is the ceaseless murmur of the torrent, dashing along on its wild course, singing an endless song to the eternal and exquisite harmony of nature. How susceptible to these impressions must Beethoven have been; how vivid his imaginative powers; when, in spite of deafness, he could return home from his solitary walks, and give us the songs of the birds, and the sounds of nature, in his wonderful Pastoral Symphony! In such a place as this torrent walk, it might have been composed. The great lonely mind might have soothed itself in wandering about its sylvan beauties and neighbouring hills; imagining a flood of melody from the feathered songsters flying from bough to bough, and glinting amidst the whispering leaves and the sunbeams; whilst he trod the soft mosses beneath his feet, and plucked the rare ferns; or bent his ear to the stream in a vain hope of catching the faintest sound of its murmur.

At length you reach the upper bridge, and find that the carriage has already driven round by the roadway, and is waiting to drive you back to Dolgelly for an hour's rest and lunch.

Dolgelly itself looks antiquated enough to have been founded in the days of Noah. As the capital of Merionethshire, it says little for the remaining towns of the county. Its chief object of interest is Owain Glendowr's house; though doubt seems to be thrown upon the fact of his ever having lived there. But, as our sketch shows, it is a quaint building, not unworthy its reputation. From Dolgelly the easiest ascent of Cader Idris is made, either on foot or on the back of a Welsh pony. The view from its summit is extensive and fine. On the south are the Plinlimmon and the Brecknock beacons; on the east the Arran and Bala lake; and on clear days, stretching far behind, may be obtained a view of the Wrekin; to the north lies Snowdon; and to the west we see Cardigan Bay and the great ocean.

The hotel seemed surprisingly comfortable for so uncivilized a town, and its warm shelter was quitted for a long drive back in the cold, not without a sense of reluctance. But the beauties of mountain and

water; the wealth of the roadside hedges, which were tall and towering; in some measure made up for the discomforts of the elements.

Half an hour's journey by rail in the opposite direction landed us one day at Harlech, under the very shadow of its grim old castle. And here verily we were in the midst of antiquities, and historical reminiscences, and ghostly remembrances. The steep ascent was soon scaled, and from the battlements of the old ruin was obtained—how splendid a view! On the one side was Cardigan Bay stretching away into ocean, bounded on the right by a long chain of hills, which afar off seemed to throw their shadows upon the water. Very beautiful and peaceful was this water; very blue and green; with lights and depths upon its surface cast by the shadows of the light fleecy clouds

SUMMIT AND LAKE OF CADER IDRIS.

chasing each other swiftly across the face of the blue sky; shadows that—amidst the intense repose of Nature; so far above the world; so far removed from its din and strife—one could almost fancy were those of unseen ministering spirits sent forth to minister. By-and-by the sun dipped down and threw over this great sheet of water one of the most glorious floods of gold surely ever seen in this world. What a radiant blaze it was! How possible it seemed to penetrate, as it were, the mysteries of illimitable space; to be gazing into another world; to be enjoying a foresight of that blaze of glory which shall be when the gates of Heaven roll back at the Last Day, and countless hosts come forth at the trumpet-blast! Every moment the scene changed, both on sea and sky; now the white vapoury clouds became rosy; now they took the deeper tint of orange, and now passed into the red and crimson. Immediately overhead the blue was an intense purple, which gradually toned down towards the horizon into that pale aqua-marine which is so exquisitely pure and lovely. Not a sail broke the still monotony, the awful silence, of the sea; not a ripple disturbed

its surface: except now and then as a slight breeze passed over and gently ruffled it, and the sunbeams kissed its bosom in millions of golden gleam-like flashes, which glittered and sparkled, and threw their glamour over these hoary battlements. What easy and pleasant work to lounge on the top of that ancient ruin and dream away hours and days: surrounded with past histories in which to read up, and grow familiar with, all the characters with whom the thought of the country is ever inseparable: who have made themselves a place in the world's annals: who were loved or feared, as the case might be, in their day and generation; a day to them of power, of lust, of craft, of oppression, of tenderness, of forbearance. They have had their day; a day now misty with age and the uncertainty of what was and what was not;

OWAIN GLENDOWR'S HOUSE, DOLGELLY.

and their great deeds and great ambitions, weakened as they are by the lapse of centuries, seem to us of no more weight or moment than the play of a child who plants his footprint upon the sand, to watch its obliteration by the next advancing wave.

Yet in those old days those warriors, men and women, gazed upon this scene and found it exactly as it is to-day, in all but the ruins of the old castle. If we are to believe history, on this very site stood a castle more than thirteen hundred years ago. The castle now in ruins is said to have been built in the reign of Edward I., from designs of Henri de Ellerton. In 1404, Owain Glendowr obtained possession of the fortress, but was turned out of it by Prince Henry. In 1468, the Earl of Pembroke besieged it under the order of King Edward. At this siege that well-known march of the "Men of Harlech" was composed; a march to which the present words were written by the

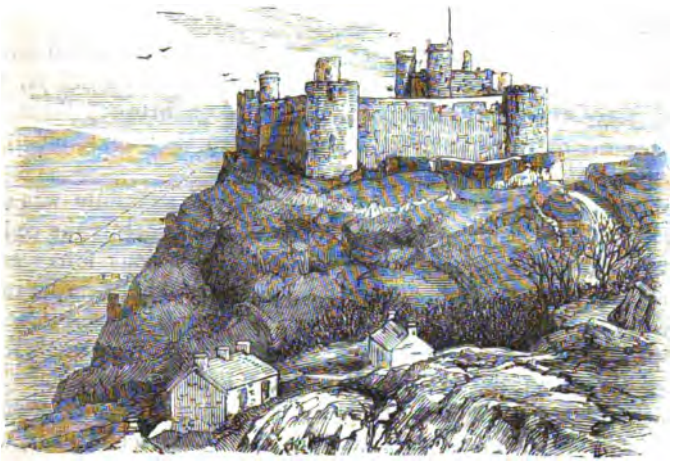
late talented William Duthie, who frequently contributed to the *Argosy* up to the time of his death in 1870.

Just as those old warriors gazed upon the scene then, so they might gaze now. Immediately before us stretched a long flat plain, which at one time, you would almost think, must have been covered by the sea.

This great plain was bound by the grand chain of mountains; in a direct line with the castle was Snowdon, grandest and most massive of all; and the second Wonder of Wales mentioned in this paper. To-day the mountains, like the sea, were no two moments alike: the mist which partly enveloped them, shifting from one to another, varying their shapes, now concealing and now disclosing; until you could almost fancy that the Old Man of the Mountains must be rattling about his dominions in a vapoury chariot. The sun would throw his beams now here, now there, as the light clouds intervened; so that a mountain would be now in sunshine and now in shade, producing almost the impression of a moving panorama. How silent and splendid they looked, those hills, waiting in patience their day of doom! Suddenly in the distance a small white thread trailed along the landscape, like a pale serpent stealing quietly upon its foe. Ah! here was a sight those great men of a past age never witnessed; never dreamed of. With all their mighty powers they never dreamed of the mightier power of the steam-engine, which has done more than any other earthly power to change the face of the globe from what it then was to what it is now. Above and around us, wheeled hundreds of rooks and jackdaws; now darkening the air and causing the old ruin to echo with their hoarse chatter; now clustering upon a tower, and holding to all appearance grave and weighty consultations. Indeed, from the large amount of noise and disputing going on, and the small amount of apparent result, we concluded that this old tower represented the houses of parliament of the bird kingdom, and these noisy debaters its members.

But the quickly passing time compelled us to quit this magic scene and return to the station. There we surveyed the scene under a different aspect. We were now in the valley, looking upwards instead of downwards. How grand and hoary was the old ruin! what a fine, extensive, magnificent ruin it is! How exercised in their poetical imaginations the old Welsh bards must feel as they meet here once a year at the Eisteddfod, and hold forth between the four grey walls of the grass-grown courtyard: or what we may now style the courtyard, though it was not so in the days gone by. Around us were the hills, many of them covered with the sombre Scotch firs; and the smoke from the cottages in the plain ascended in a blue mist, which entwined about the trees and seemed to give them a little of that warmth and friendly feeling towards mankind they appear so much to need. It was the hour of gloaming: here and there a woodcutter and his dog;

the axe having done its day's work, slung over the man's shoulder; were wending their way homewards. But for the most part all was still, quiet, and inanimate. Presently the thin white line of steam came twisting round a corner, just about two hours from the time it was first noticed threading about the far-away hills. Very soon it came up; we were shut into the train, and steamed off again. Closing our eyes, a vision of Harlech rose up before them. As we



HARLECH CASTLE.

had just seen it, with all the romance of the gloaming about it, and the distant chain of mountains: as we might have seen it had we existed centuries ago. One by one, a ghostly procession passed upon the canvas of the imagination: the actors with which history has made us familiar: until at length a cry of "Barmouth! Barmouth!" started us up to exertion, and the vision vanished.

Space warns us that it will be wise to close with this glimpse of Harlech. We shall find it difficult to see a better or more beautiful. It is one of the loveliest spots of Wales; a spot with which all should become familiar; a spot that, seen on such a day and at such an hour as I saw it, will leave upon the memory an impression not to be destroyed by that Enemy who swallows up and crumbles away, even kingdoms, constitutions, and castles themselves—Time.

May he deal gently with you, reader, and with me, until for us Time himself in turn shall be no more.

C. W. W.

MADGE'S SACRIFICE.

By E. M. Alford.

"I SAY, Kit, isn't this cozy?"

"Awfully so!" responded the curly-headed youth appealed to, taking a pipe out of his pocket, and stroking complacently its highly polished surface.

The young people were ensconced on two crimson-cushioned settees, within one of those dear old open chimneys, so rare nowadays, with logs blazing brightly on the polished steel dogs between them. A very favourite resort of any of the family, when they could indulge in a firelight chat.

The room on which the bright beams played so fitfully was most picturesque. Rather low, with great beams showing across the ceiling; oak-panelled walls, oaken tables and chairs of various forms, and a polished oak skirting to the floor, with a well-worn Turkey-carpet in the centre. The windows were heavily mullioned, and rejoiced in quaint old tapestry curtains, in keeping with the quaintness of the whole room.

"Yes," went on the girl, meditatively, "I don't believe there ever was such a dear homely home as ours. You can't think how often the thought of this chimney-corner has kept me right at school, Kit, when I have been inclined to throw my lesson-books out of window, and scamper off on the moors. I do so hate poring over books when the sun's shining!"

Kit shrugged his broad shoulders, and said, lazily: "There, don't go lecturing me any more, Madge, for of course it's double as hard for us men." (Kit was barely twenty.) "Girls are made to keep quiet. But what's the good of having a broad chest and strong limbs, I should like to know, if the one is to get narrow, and the others limp, poring over books?"

And Kit stood up and stretched himself, knocking down an imaginary foe, with a fist, on either side.

Madge gazed up at him admiringly, but said quietly: "If I were a man, I'd work, though, Kit, at something or other. Do you know, I'm half ashamed of you, sometimes, when I see you lounging there so contentedly, while that dear father of yours is working so hard in his dull little study. If you don't pass, this time, I shall set you down as a dunce, or worse, when you know how they all pinch at home to keep you at college."

"Talking of that, Madge, I want your advice," said Kit, in the most affable manner. "I've got myself into a bit of a scrape by not paying my tailor at Oxford. The fellow wouldn't wait, you see, and there were one or two other pressing trifles; so I borrowed a few

pounds—twenty, I think—of Tom Helston; and he's so hard up now, poor chap, that he can't put his hand on the pound or two to come home for Christmas. His mother and Mary will be in a fine way about it."

"Oh, Kit! how could you?" exclaimed Madge, the colour mounting to her temples, and her blue eyes filling. "Tom Helston, of all people; with his poor mother a widow, and pretty Mary going without a new dress for Christmas, even!"

Kit blushed this time, and said, penitently: "I am a selfish, thoughtless brute, Madge; but you'll help me through this once more, won't you? If you don't stick to me, I shall come to grief for certain. There's nothing like being stuck to, for keeping a fellow straight."

Madge could not restrain a smile at the comically dolorous tone in which this was said, and at the look of resigned despair on her brother's handsome sunny face as he appealed to her.

"Oh! you are incorrigible, Kit; but I'll stick to you, never fear, till I leave you in safer hands. But let me warn you that Mary doesn't approve of handsome do-nothings any more than I."

"What on earth is that to me?" said Kit, getting red, but not with anger. "Anyhow, you'll manage about the twenty pounds, won't you? I haven't the face to ask the dear old governor for another advance just now?"

A pained expression passed across the sister's face as she answered, "That's half cowardice, Kit. It's the doing wrong, not the confessing it, that we ought to shrink from, I think. Suppose, now, you give up your pipe for the holidays: that would go some way towards bringing Tom home; and I'll advance you two pounds out of my allowance to send him. We must see about the rest by-and-by."

"Beggars mustn't be choosers," said Kit, with a shrug; "but I call it hard lines on a fellow. Anyhow, here goes!" and he threw the mahogany-coloured meerschaum under the grate.

Thereupon Madge rose, and going to a neat little desk, took out two sovereigns, wrapped carefully in tissue-paper, stored away for some pet scheme of her own. She did not tell Kit, as she put them with a smile into his hand, that they were the scraped-together savings of the year, hoarded up with care for the pleasure of giving a Christmas-tree to the school-children this Christmas-tide.

Kit drew down the fair face to his own and gave it a hearty kiss, and then rose, saying more gravely than was his wont:

"I declare, Madge, you're a regular brick, and I feel no end ashamed of myself. I won't make any more promises. Least said soonest mended; but you'll see if I don't turn over a new leaf."

So Kit went off to the post-office, and Madge sat down by the fire again with a happy face. Not to think over her sacrifice, but to ponder long and earnestly on the possibility of getting the rest of the money to pay off Kit's rash debt.

Meantime, Kit passed out at the vicarage gate in the winter twilight, and sauntered along past the church and the pretty cottages that bordered the village road, with its wide margin of sward and stately sheltering elms, to the post-office.

He had paused ere he reached it, however, before the most dainty of these cottages, and gazed in through the unshuttered window upon the coziest of parlours, where the firelight flickered on gilt-framed pictures and tasty furniture, and lingered lovingly around the bent head of a young girl, as she knelt by the chair of an elder lady sorting some gay-coloured wools on her lap.

The elder lady was Mrs. Helston, the widow of the late vicar, and the kneeling girl was Mary.

Kit heaved a great sigh as he gazed. At any other time he would have rushed in upon them, sure of a kindly welcome. But now he dared not face their sad looks. His punishment had begun. Never mind; to-morrow would bring Tom down, and then all would be right. So thinking, he hastened on to the post-office, and despatched Madge's savings.

He found his sister still over the fire on his return. Her pretty fair hair drawn up from her brow, as the little hands had worked in it thoughtfully, her blue eyes shining eagerly, her small mouth firmly set.

"Kit, I've been thinking, and I've made up my mind. Tom must be paid whatever it costs, and father mustn't be worried. You and I must do it, Kit. *I* have an idea. Have *you?*"

"Not the ghost of one. I wish I had."

"Well, you must sit here alone as I have done, and think hard till you've got one. And the first thing to-morrow you will walk with me into the town, won't you? And then I shall see how mine will work."

"All right, Madge. Do you know, I half think Tom's in love with you. He's always raving about your wonderful hair. You let it all down in the tableau last Christmas, as Undine, you know, and Tom can't forget it."

"Can't he?" said Madge with a curious smile, as she left the room.

Arrived at her own room she shut herself in, and putting on a pretty white dressing-gown, unfastened the shining golden braids, and let the wealth of glittering hair fall like a cloak around her. Then she stood in front of the glass, and gazed long and earnestly. At last she turned away with a slight sigh of regret, saying aloud: "Good-bye, old wig; good-bye, young Madge. What a fright you'll be by this time to-morrow!"

II.

A BRIGHT frosty morning, with that delightful freshness in the air which makes the heart dance with joy, whether it will or no. And

there was no want of will in the two young people who set out together on their expedition to the three miles' distant town, as soon as breakfast was over.

Kit and Madge were the vicar's only children by his first wife, but there were three little ones by the present Mrs. Mowbray, and Madge had early determined to work for herself and cease to be a burden on her father as soon as possible. With this view she had been acting as pupil-teacher in a good school for the last year, and having now arrived at the age of eighteen, considered it high time to make her start in life. Kit was a source of anxiety and expense to the family, which was an extra inducement to Madge to exert herself. And she was glad of the opportunity of discussing her plans with him on this soul-cheering morning. Madge's enthusiasm inspired Kit, and the three miles' walk was quickly accomplished as the two chatted eagerly over their resolutions and plans for the future.

"I felt uncommonly queer, I can tell you, Madge, as I looked in at Mrs. Helston's window last evening, and for the first time in my life daren't go in, knowing how cut-up they'd be to see me without Tom. I've been downright ashamed of myself ever since you gave me the money. And so help me, Heaven!" he added gravely, raising his hand for a moment, "I won't run into debt again, come what may."

"That's a good Kit; now I don't mind anything," said Madge as she stopped at the chief hair-dresser's shop, with her face all in a glow. "Now you go and read the papers," she added, "and I'll meet you in half an hour at the post-office. And mind, Kit, when you see me, you're not to say a word."

Unsuspicious Kit went his way, preoccupied with a plan of his own; namely, the selling of some new costly books, the thoughtless purchase of which during his last term at Oxford had helped to bring him into such straits, and driven him to borrow of his poor but generous-hearted friend. It was to spare the feelings of Kit's home people that Tom had lent the money; he was too prudent and thoughtful a son to have done so for any less purpose. But while Kit is eating humble-pie at the chief stationer's shop, and arranging to part with his beautiful favourites at so much less than he gave for them but a few months before, Madge has entered the barber's with an inward shrinking, and is confronted with Mr. Combe, the master of the shop.

Madge entered the inner room, feeling very shy and frightened, and utterly at a loss to explain her errand. But she sat herself in front of the mirror silently, the white cloth was thrown around her shoulders, the glittering braids let down, and then fortune favoured her.

Mr. Combe started with unfeigned admiration as he unplaited braid after braid and shook out the silky hair, and said:

"Excuse me, miss, but what a head of hair, to be sure! It would be a fortune to me just now. I happen to have to fit up a lady with an

entire head-dress of just this particular shade. I have sent far and wide to match it in vain. See, miss," laying a thin strip of golden hair against Madge's luxuriant tresses, "it takes the tint to a T. You don't happen to be wanting to part with any of it, I reckon? I could afford £4 for the half of it, and welcome." The good man had spoken, of course, in jest, chatting on as he brushed out the glittering mass admiringly; so that he was considerably taken aback when Madge answered demurely:

"How fortunate I should have come to-day! Yes, I will sell it gladly if you will give me £8 for the whole. I could not part with it by halves, you know."

Any pathetic feelings Madge might have had about the matter were dissipated by a merry laugh, as she caught in the mirror the expression of Mr. Combe's face, as he stood behind her, the brush suspended in his uplifted hand.

"Mercy me! miss, I thought you were in earnest, you looked so grave like," and the brush descended on the head again at the sound of the merry laugh.

"So I am, Mr. Combe; quite in earnest. I want £8 for a particular purpose, and I can do without my hair till it grows again. Come, cut it off quite close; it's best to get a thing done, when you've made up your mind."

"Excuse me, miss, I daren't do it, such lovely hair as it is. Your folks would be downright savage with me if I were to let myself be tempted."

"Oh, no they wouldn't," laughed Madge. "They can trust me to do what I will with my own. If you won't cut it off for me, I must do it myself," seizing on an idle pair of scissors.

"Oh! please, miss, no; don't chop it off anyhow! If it is to be done, let me manage it skilfully for you, so as to show as little as possible. Unfortunately, it is too soft and silky for a crop. I'm afraid you won't like the look of it, miss."

"I don't expect to," said resolute Madge. "I know what you mean; it will be just a head of stubble. Never mind, time will mend matters. Now make haste, please."

And Madge shut fast the merry blue eyes, that she might not watch the process in the mirror. The deed was quickly done, and she was aroused by Mr. Combe's saying:

"There, miss! I'm sure I beg your pardon. It does seem a sin and a shame. But if a £10 note down would be any comfort, I'm sure it's worth it well." And he stroked the beautiful long tresses admiringly.

"Oh! thank you," said Madge gratefully, turning away from the mirror, where she had caught a glimpse of a smooth, round golden head, and childish face, with a momentary shock.

The half-hour was just up, and stowing away carefully the precious

£10 note in an old leather purse: and muffling the little head in a thick veil she had wisely brought for the purpose, Madge hastened to join her brother.

Kit, preoccupied with his own troubles, did not notice at first any alteration in her appearance. And they walked briskly homewards, he lamenting over the loss of some of his favourite books which the bookseller was to take off his hands to the amount of £10.

"And I am sure they cost me at least double that," sighed the youth. "If there is one thing more intolerable than another in this weary world, it's poverty, and no mistake."

"Now, don't grumble, Kit," said Madge cheerily. "I don't think it's half bad to be poor. It must be very hard not to be selfish, when you can always have just what you want. I've often thought what a help it was not to be rich."

"But, then, Madge, you know you're not like other people. You always were an oddity, though of the right sort. But what a pace you are going at! are you cold?"

"I should think I was; the wind seems to blow right into my skull."

"And you've got a thick veil on, too. I say, Madge, what have you done to your head?"

"I've been to the hair-dresser's, of course. Wait till by-and-by before you criticise the result. I call it first-rate."

And so they chatted on till the old vicarage was gained, where Madge crept up to her room the back way, her head aching so, poor girl, from its unusual exposure to the cutting east wind, that she could only lay it on her pillow and cry.

Presently the dinner-bell rang, and Madge started up, realizing for the first time the ordeal she had to go through, and in her present aching state dreading it extremely. The pain was a sufficient excuse for a little delay. So, locking her door, she sent down a message that her head ached badly, and she had rather rest than eat, and then covering herself up on the bed, she fell into a sound slumber.

Twilight was creeping on when she awoke, much refreshed, though cold and hungry. She smoothed down the short ends of gold, that had got stivered out into a sort of halo during her sleep, and descended to the oak-panelled parlour.

There, as she expected, was the whole family party sitting round the hearth in the gloaming. But, as she had not expected, another youth sat by Kit's side; Tom Helston himself. He had joyfully set off for home as soon as Kit's remittance had arrived.

He sprang up eagerly to greet her as she came in, but gave an involuntary start as the firelight played on the glossy cropped head.

At the same moment a chorus of voices exclaimed, "Why, Madge, what have you done to yourself?"

"You look like a charity-school girl," said pert Miss Nellie.

"Or an escaped convict," chimed in Master Bob.

"Or an unfledged duckling!" suggested Kit.

"What has become of your golden plumage, my bird?" asked the father kindly, making room for poor blushing Madge on the chimney settee, beside him. He noted that the merry blue eyes were glistening, and though puzzled himself, longed to shield his darling.

Madge made a desperate effort to rally her spirits, and resist the inclination to rush off and hide her literally diminished head on her own pillow.

"I've turned it into more substantial gold, father," she said, looking up into the kind face by her side. "I know I am a fright, but if you would only none of you look at me these holidays, I daresay it will have grown to a decent length again by the next."

"Sold it!" exclaimed the chorus of voices again. "Who'd have thought of Madge being so mercenary!"

Poor Madge! the ordeal was far worse than she had anticipated.

"I wanted the money for a very particular purpose. Father, mother, indeed, indeed it was very important," she urged, as she saw the surprised and rather pained expression on her father's face, and the disapproving frown on her mother's.

"I think, Madge, you might have consulted me on the matter first," said the latter.

"It's altogether preposterous!" said Kit angrily, as he pushed back his chair and hastily left the room.

"I'm sorry I've vexed everyone so," said poor Madge; "but still I think it was right. I'm afraid," she added, trying to rally, "you only cared for my poor old wig, not for its wearer at all. I never guessed before how like Samson I was, nor that all my power would depart with my hair!"

Tom Helston said nothing, but sat looking very blank for awhile, and soon took his departure.

That same evening, as he sat with his sister over the cottage fire, he exclaimed, not à propos of anything that had been said before:

"It's a miserable old concern of a world, Polly! The people you think the highest and best, turn out to be mean, money-loving, commonplace folks, after all!" And the good-humoured face puckered itself into a most uncomfortable frown.

III.

MADGE'S Christmas did not promise to be a very bright one this year. And had she not been sustained by entering into the true spirit of that blessed festival, I think her brave heart would have given way to depression and discontent, under her troubles.

In her generous impulsiveness, she had not considered, as she should have done, the duty she owed her parents before taking so decided a step. Perhaps the fact of working for herself so early had made the girl of eighteen more independent in her feelings than became her age. And though no further word of blame came from either father or mother concerning her deed, she thought she could detect a shade of disappointment and distrust in their faces, which her troubled fancy, dwelt on and exaggerated.

As for Tom, generally so full of life and fun at holiday times, and Madge's devoted admirer, a change had come over the youth; his sister declaring that he was sulky from morning till night, and always railing against the unpoetical, money-making spirit of the age.

But worst of all was Kit—Kit, for whom all this annoyance had been encountered. Instead of thanking her when she put the £10 note into his hand, thinking that here at least would be a ray of pleasure, he crumpled it up almost savagely, and said, with as much temper as such an easy-going lad was capable of:

"I've a mind to toss the dirty bit of paper into the fire, Madge. I call it uncommon hard lines on a fellow to be made out such a brute as all that!"

"As all what, Kit?"

"Why, to take the very hair off his sister's head to pay his beggarly bills. I wish all those books had been at the bottom of the sea, and my best suit into the bargain!"

"That would have been a pity, as the fishes wouldn't have appreciated them," said Madge, trying to laugh.

"Now don't chaff, Madge. I am awfully put out, I can tell you. I wouldn't have had it happen for twice the money. Why, I thought I might have had you up to Oxford this comem., if I pinched a bit. But I couldn't have the face to lionise you now."

"Oh! Kit, don't bother like all the rest!" said poor Madge, driven to speak out at last. And therewith the tears overflowed.

Kit couldn't stand that, so he strode off with the hardly-earned money. The next day he walked into the town again to receive another ten-pound note from the bookseller, on the receipt of the huge box of books sent from Oxford by the lad's order. On his way home he met Tom Helston, and paid him the remainder of his debt. But Tom was ungracious too.

"If you were so flush of money, Kit, why couldn't you have given your sister what she wanted? I'd have waited gladly."

It was on the tip of Kit's tongue to tell the tale of the hair, only Madge had bound him over to keep the peace, fearing his friend's refusal to take the money so earned. Thus Kit could but shrug his shoulders, and say, somewhat enigmatically: "I tell you what it is, Tom, I don't know about intellectual equality and all that tall-talk; but as to

the moral line, they beat us all to bits, and no mistake!" And so the friends parted.

Poor Kit! he had never felt so ashamed of himself in his short life before. It seemed to put his easy-going self-indulgence and carelessness about money affairs in quite a new light. He called himself a great many ugly names in private, and wore a defiant, aggrieved air in public for some days. At last, on Christmas Eve, he could stand it no longer, and startled Madge with the exclamation: "I say, Madge, it's more than a fellow can stand; I wouldn't have come home this vac., if I'd known how horrid it would be. I'm not going to keep the peace any longer. So you must let me off. I shall tell the governor first, and Tom after. A fellow can't go through Christmas with a thing like this on his mind!"

"Very well, Kit; only don't let Tom make a fuss about the money. Now my hair's gone, it would be too bad to have lost it in vain."

"You won't have done that, Madge, anyhow," said Kit in a choky voice. "You've made me see myself in my right colours at last. I had no idea before what a selfish villain I was."

Madge smiled brightly up into the dolorous face above her, saying: "You are our own dear old Kit! of whom we shall all be proud some day, I know."

And so, with lightened hearts, the two separated: Kit to repair to his father's study, there to make his contrite confession, and explain Madge's sacrifice; Madge to lay out the two pounds Kit had returned to her, on buns and presents for the school-children's feast, which was to take place on this Christmas Eve.

The oak-panelled parlour before described was to be the scene of the festivities, where forty boys and girls were to be regaled first, and entertained after by a Christmas-tree and magic-lantern; the former to be presided over by Madge and Mary Helston, the latter to be managed by Kit and Tom.

The girls had been pricking their fingers over holly decorations, and making their arms ache with decking the tree during a good part of the afternoon, with only Nellie and Bob, and little Clare, as their helpers or hinderers. The last thing was to hang the mistletoe, and that was quite beyond their powers.

"I wish Tom were here," sighed Mary. "He used to be so ready to help in this sort of thing. But when I asked him to come with me to-day, he looked quite glum, and said he had other things to attend to. So tiresome, too, for I know he's only moping about at home, and worrying mother with his dismals."

"And Kit's gone out too," said Nellie: "and he has always hung the mistletoe before!"

The absence of the respective brothers seemed to throw a gloom over the party. The young ones missed the rollicking fun that Kit

and Tom together generally set going. And the two girls, I think, if the truth must be told, each felt a certain amount of depression at the defection of their respective cavaliers. For poor Kit had been too out of heart with himself this Christmas-tide to venture much into Mary's presence; looking upon her, as he did, as a superior being to himself; one whom it was almost profanation for such a good-for-nothing spendthrift to dare to approach.

Tom Helston, on the other hand, had nursed his wrath against Madge for the mercenary disposal of her hair. And though sore at heart over his broken idol, had yet been barely civil to her when they unavoidably met.

Now Madge felt this much more than she could have believed possible. She had always felt a great interest in Tom, and in his successes at school and college. But she had fancied this a similar sisterly interest to that which she had taken in Kit's triumphs at cricket and foot-ball. Nor did she guess till deprived of it how precious his friendship was to her; nor how much of her own mental growth she owed to the long holiday letters with the clever, well-read Oxonian; nor how much the tedium of school-work was cheered by the thought of how Tom Helston would expect her to be well up in this, or to cultivate her taste for that. She knew now that she had disappointed him, and felt depressed with the consciousness.

The twilight was creeping on, and the spiritless workers were sitting listlessly on the chimney settees, when, with a merry peal of laughter, Kit burst into the room, laden with a great branch of glistening holly thickly besprinkled with berries, and followed more quietly by Tom with a gigantic mistletoe-bough.

"Hallo! little ones," cried Kit, throwing down his holly, "set to work and strip off all these sprigs, while Tom and I hoist this fine fellow to the ceiling. By your leave, Miss Mary," stooping to kiss the blushing girl, as she stood admiring the pretty white berries of the bough he had suspended.

Kit was himself again, and no mistake, as full of fun and frolic as the most frolicsome could wish. And pretty Mary brightened up, and the children grew uproarious. But Madge, though happy in the changed aspect of things, felt shy and ill at ease, and uncomfortably conscious of her cropped head.

While Tom, generally so full of quiet humour, and so ready to respond to Kit's jokes, looked unwontedly grave for him, with a new expression on his kind, clever face, that Madge could not interpret.

At last the mistletoe was hung, and all arrangements completed, half an hour before the time for the arrival of the guests, when Kit exclaimed:

"Now for a coze round the fire, and see who can tell the most horrible stories!"

"No, no!" said little Clare, "I don't like Kit's stories; they're all about ghosts and ogres. Please, Mr. Tom, tell us a fairy story; I like your stories best."

And the little maid climbed on his knee, and nestled her curly head against his shoulder, composing herself to a comfortable listening, with one chubby finger thrust into her mouth.

"Very well," said Tom; "I'll try:

"Once upon a time there was a very beautiful princess, and she was as good as she was beautiful. Everybody praised her; some for her beauty, and some for her goodness, and not a few for both.

"She was always dressed, too, in the loveliest dresses, and wore the most dazzling jewels in the world. And the people of that country were very proud of their princess, and of all her beauty and splendid attire.

"Now it came to pass that there was a dreadful famine in one part of that land. It was the people's own fault, because they had been too lazy to sow the seeds properly in the spring. But the consequence was that women and children and even strong men were dying for want of food, and for lack of money to buy food from those that had plenty.

"At last in their trouble they went to the good princess and asked her to help them.

"So she emptied all her coppers and gave them every penny she had, and they went away happy.

"But soon they came again in as much distress as before; for that money was all spent, and the famine was worse than ever.

"Then the princess took off all her brilliant jewels and gave them to the beggars. But the courtiers grumbled and said: 'Why should our princess lose her beauty for the sake of these miserables? There is nothing so priceless as beauty.'

"Then the princess answered: 'Look on me, my people, the fairy Selbstverleugnung * maketh amends.'

"And as they looked, they saw a fairy wand waved over their princess, and were obliged to confess that her beauty was more dazzling than before.

"But again the poor people came in their tattered garments to ask for bread. Then the princess arose and took one of the poor women with her into an inner chamber, and exchanged her own gorgeous attire for the tattered clothing of the poor woman, and returned again to her throne.

"But when the courtiers saw what was done they were more furious still, and exclaimed: 'Shame on our princess to insult her beauty thus. There is nothing so priceless as beauty!'

"But again the fairy wand waved in the air over her bent head, and again the people confessed, 'Her beauty is more dazzling than ever!'

* Self-sacrifice.

"When next the beggars came, the courtiers jeered at them and said: 'Go home, ye knaves! ye have spoiled our princess already. What would you have of her now?'

"But the princess lifted her snowy arms, and took out the pin that fastened her golden locks, till they fell, a shower of real gold, around her, and flowed over the steps of the throne to the very feet of the beggars. Then the princess called for a pair of shears and clipped them all off, and the beggars gathered up the shining gold in armfuls, and went away blessing her.

"But the courtiers were furious now, and would have pursued and beaten the beggars, had not the princess called to them in her gracious tones, and said: 'Look on me, my people, the fairy Selbstverleugnung maketh amends.' And when they turned, lo! there was the wand waving over the head of the princess, and her beauty was more dazzling than ever!

"Again the beggars came in their distress, and now the princess was puzzled for a moment. But presently she sent for a clever dentist, who put her under laughing-gas, and drew all her pearly teeth in a twinkling by the power of steam. Each tooth was a separate pearl of great value. So the beggars went away richer than ever with their thirty-six precious pearls, and never came to beg of their princess any more, but bought corn, and cropped their lands diligently, singing the praises of their beautiful princess, who had given her very hair and her teeth for them!

"But when the courtiers saw the dainty pearls fall from her ruby lips, they were mad with anger, and ran upon the beggars to kill them.

"But suddenly the sweet tones of the princess checked them, as she cried: 'Look on me, my people, and confess that the fairy Selbstverleugnung yet maketh amends.'

So they turned and looked on her, and the courtiers had to shade their eyes with their hands, so dazzling was the brilliancy of her beauty.

"Then they exclaimed with one voice: 'Hail to the fairy Selbstverleugnung! Hail to our peerless princess! Beauty is precious for beauty's sake, but the beauty of Selbstverleugnung is beyond all price!'"

"What a funny story!" said little Clare. "What does that long word mean?"

"It means self-sacrifice," said Tom, "and it is the name of the good fairy that makes even ugly people beautiful, and makes the lovely, lovelier far."

"I'm sure the princess couldn't have looked pretty," asserted Nellie, "when all her hair was gone, and her teeth too. She must have been a worse fright even than Madge!"

On hearing her own name, Madge looked up from her intense gaze

into the fire, and glanced across at Tom on the opposite settee. But as their eyes met, a conscious blush passed over her fair face, and the blue eyes drooped again under his earnest gaze, while little Clare added to her confusion by exclaiming, with a sudden happy thought:

"I do believe Mr. Tom meant Madge all along, and that she is his beautiful princess!"

Upon this Madge rose, saying she must go and look out for her guests.

And Tom presently followed her, and found her standing in the quaint old porch, cooling her blushing cheeks in the frosty air, and waiting for the children.

"Oh! Madge," he said in a tone of entreaty, "will you be my own beautiful princess, and teach me through life your lesson of Selbstverleugnung?"

Madge raised her glistening blue eyes to his, and said, smiling through her tears:

"Oh! Tom, how can I be that, when you know I am such a fright?"

How Tom convinced her of the contrary, it is not our mission to inquire. We only know that the considerate school-children gave them time to settle the matter there in the porch to their mutual satisfaction, and that the said children received a beaming welcome from the happy pair as their reward, when at last they made their appearance, trooping up hand in hand to the vicarage, singing a carol as they went.

Never had a happier Christmas Eve been passed under that dear old vicarage roof than was spent by the young people on this particular occasion entertaining their merry guests. And when the vicar laid his hand on Madge's head as she wished him good-night, saying, "Bless you, my child, it was a golden deed after all," she felt that her cup at least was brim full.

Some years have passed since then. Kit has taken his degree without any more failures or debts, and is helping his father as curate: the villagers respecting him none the less for being the best cricketer in all the country round. He and his pretty wife live with her mother in the dainty cottage aforementioned.

His friend Tom has led a brilliant career so far, and is looked upon as one of the most promising young barristers at the Bar. His wife's golden head is often bent with his over his work, and she is in the full sense of the word "a helpmeet" for him.

PARKWATER.

By the Author of "East Lynne."

CHAPTER III.

MR. FRED LYVETT.

IT is possible that even at this early stage, a faint idea of some mistake in the training of their daughter began to dawn upon May and his wife. That Sophia was no longer one of themselves, and never would be again, was easy to be seen. In habits, manners, education, and ideas, she was above them: as Mrs. May might have expressed it, she had been lifted into a different spear. And what could come of it?—speaking only of the feelings. Nothing but cruel disappointment to themselves, and bitter mortification to her. Sophia had been brought up to be ashamed of her parents; or, rather, the shame was the result. They had educated her to be a lady (according to their notions of one), and really poor Sophia was not to be blamed if she responded to it.

What her future was to be, what they should do with her, and where she was to live, gave concern to Mrs. May. But for the foolish pursuit of that low literature which had warped her mind, she would have been rather a sensible woman; certainly she was a well-meaning one. Sophia plainly told her—and the tears stood in the girl's eyes as she said it—that she could never reconcile herself to sit in the kitchen; she *could not*. Her meals she was obliged to take in it, but after each one she retired to her own room in the attic. When the doors were shut, and the shutters closed at night, she would then come back to the kitchen, sure of not being seen there by the world.

"This can't go on," sighed Mrs. May to her husband. "Whatever will be done with her? The poor child will eat her heart away."

A possible solution to it was to dawn. Whether the fault was Mr. Frederick Lyvett's, or whether it was Miss May's; whether it arose by accident, or whether by design; certain it is, that in the course of the next week or two, they met and conversed together three or four times, in the street, or on the stairs. By the end of the second week they had become tolerably intimate, so that it probably did not surprise Sophia, though it did her father and mother, when, on the following Sunday, early in the afternoon, Mr. Fred appeared, and said he was come to escort Miss May to Westminster Abbey, which he had heard her express a wish to see, that she "might compare its architecture with that of the Roman Catholic churches she had been accustomed to admire in France."

Had Mr. Frederick Lyvett offered to take her to inspect a Roman

Catholic purgatory in the fiery regions, it is certain that Mr. and Mrs. May would never have dared to offer an objection, so impressed were they with the honour done her by going anywhere with a Lyvett. Accordingly, they started.

"You don't know how pleased I am that you consented to come with me," he began.

"Did you think I should not?" asked Miss May.

"Well—our acquaintance has been so short that I thought you might object on that score. Still, I knew you were a sensible girl, without any stupid nonsense about you."

"Perhaps it is not quite comme il faut my coming out like this, but it is so grateful to me to get, even for an hour, into congenial society, that I forget appearances. You must be aware that in my home (as I must perforce call it) there is no society for *me*."

"Certainly, old May and his—I mean Mr. and Mrs. May—are very different from you. When he told me that first Sunday that you were his daughter, I could not believe it."

"I *am* different," answered Sophia. "And how I shall manage to drag through my days in a place and position so unsuited to me, I cannot tell. I have been miserable ever since I returned. As a child, my social unhappiness did not strike me, but now I feel it deeply. I require refinement, Mr. Lyvett: it is as necessary to my nature as air; therefore you may judge what my home is to me. I believe, if I have to stop in it, I shall die of chagrin."

"I am sure I wish I could provide you with a better," said Mr. Lyvett, in an impulse of genuine sympathy.

Unfortunately, the young man was already falling over head and ears in love. The bright vision which had burst on his astonished senses that Sunday afternoon in his father's private room had made a lasting impression on him. Every interview strengthened the feeling. He had never been in love before; but now his time for it had come. Frederick Lyvett was of a gentle, yielding nature. He had not the strong, sharp intellect of his brother James, but his feelings were strong and tender; in all his impulses he was strictly honourable, and Sophia was as safe with him as she would have been with a brother.

What with talking, and walking slowly, and looking at the fountains at Charing Cross, at the Horse Guards, and other points of interest, all of which he was delighted to show her, they arrived at Westminster Abbey just as the gates were closing after service. So all they had to do was to find their way back again, which they did with rather more speed; for Mr. Lyvett called a cab, the best-looking he could see on the stand, and escorted Sophia home in it, lest she should be tired.

Thus the acquaintance had begun, and thus it continued. Continued until the infatuated young man was really and truly in deep love with Sophia May, and had formed a resolve that when his time for marrying

came, no other than she should be his wife. Sophia saw her ends gained; or in a fair way to be so. She did not love Frederick Lyvett: she looked upon him as rather "soft." He certainly was soft in regard to her. But she coveted the social position she would attain as his wife.

It was a fact, proved afterwards, that he would descend to that kitchen of theirs, when the house was closed for the night, and partake of their meals, tea or supper, as the case might be. Old May and his wife never forgot their respect: they were the humblest of the humble; and would sit at the very far corner of the kitchen when Mr. Frederick was in it, and hand him his tea—if he chose any—at a table different from theirs. Sophia felt the degradation for him, perhaps, more than he felt it for himself. Love, as we all know, softens everything; anomalies bend before it; incongruities are not seen. No doubt, at first Frederick Lyvett winced at the kitchen and its surroundings: but his love for Sophia was stronger than he was. And he did look upon her as being very superior; refined and cultivated as were his sisters.

Sophia had persuaded her parents to part with the worn-out old piano which had so offended her nerves the night of her return, and to hire a better—she might not want one long there, she said—and Mr. Frederick Lyvett, who was passionately fond of music, would lean over her, enraptured, when she used it. She played and sang very well now: a thousand times better, Fred declared, than his sisters. Sophia did play and sing well. He was not blinded there. Her voice was sweet, and she had that aptitude for music which is sure to repay its cultivation.

How long this might have gone on, and what would really have been the upshot, it is impossible to say; for Frederick Lyvett was too young to marry; neither was he thinking of it yet. It was hardly to be expected that he, used to refinement at home, would continue long to be hail-fellow-well-met with the office kitchen, and his father's servants who inhabited it. But to Sophia's dismay and misfortune—yes, her deep, terrible misfortune—it was brought to an abrupt termination.

One day Mr. Rowley, the confidential clerk, who had been in the house for five-and-twenty years, and was a white-haired old gentleman of sixty, and a strict disciplinarian, left his own desk in the front office, gathered up some papers in his hand, and proceeded up-stairs to Mr. Lyvett's room. Mr. Lyvett looked up.

"What papers are those, Rowley? Canton's case?"

"No, sir. I only want to say a few words to you."

"What about?" asked Mr. Lyvett, in a quick tone. He was a stout man, with a pleasant eye and ready smile. His younger son must now resemble what he was in his youth.

"And of course, sir, you will not hint to Mr. Frederick that you obtained your information from me. It would set him against me in a way that would be unpleasant. But I regard him and Mr. James more

like my own sons, having nursed them as boys, and watched them grow up; and if I do open my mouth now, it is because I think his interests demand that I should."

"Why, what is it?" inquired Mr. Lyvett, in surprise.

"You know that May has got his daughter at home, sir?"

"May? Down-stairs? I know nothing about it. What if he has?"

"She is a woman grown now, and a very handsome one. Plays and sings like a professional, they say, and ——"

"*Plays* and *sings!*" echoed Mr. Lyvett, bursting into a laugh. "May's girl?"

"She does, sir, and that's not half of the folly. They clubbed together, May and his wife and that Aunt Foxaby, and gave her a boarding-school education; and finally they sent her to a school in France, to be finished off with French airs and graces. Nobody would believe now she was old May's daughter: she is really an elegant girl."

"More fools they. But what has this to do with Frederick?"

"Why, he has made her acquaintance, sir, and I believe is over head and ears in love: otherwise he would never stand by her at that piano, by the hour together, as he does."

"What do you say?" cried the lawyer, hotly. "Stands by her where? What piano?"

"Their piano, sir. They have one here, down in the kitchen."

"A piano *here!*" repeated Mr. Lyvett, growing more astonished with each disclosure. "May?"

"It is true. And there's where Mr. Frederick spends his spare time. He is in the kitchen night after night, listening to that piano."

"I'll piano him. But if May and his wife bring up their girl in this absurd way, what can they expect? Still, May is our servant, faithful and trusty. Frederick ought to be ashamed of himself. And I was thinking him so steady! sterling and upright as gold!"

"I fear that he means to marry the girl."

Mr. Lyvett's face flushed red: his tone was haughty. "What are you saying, Rowley?"

"If I say it, sir, it is in the hope that it may be guarded against. I overheard Jones chaffing Mr. Fred about it a week back: they did not know I was there. Since then I have waited after hours, and been about on Sundays."

Mr. Lyvett sat back in his chair, a frown on his brow.

"Last night, sir, I just dined hard by, and took a stroll down this street afterwards, to see if I could see anything going on; and I did. She came out, dressed in white, with chains and bracelets and things, and he handed her into a cab, hat off, as respectfully as could be, and got in afterwards. Old May fetched it from the stand at the top of the street. 'Opera, Haymarket,' Mr. Fred called out, and off they went."

"But with all this going on, Rowley—operas and cabs, and such

like—you cannot pretend to think it is an innocent, Platonic sort of affair," said Mr. Lyvett, his mouth curling with scorn.

"Innocent, sir, in one sense. I believe Mr. Fred's intentions to that girl are as honourable as ever yours were to Mrs. Lyvett. Had I thought it less serious, I don't know that I should have troubled you."

Mr. Lyvett sat and played with his watch-seals—which he wore in the old-fashioned manner, hanging down from a heavy, straight chain. "Fred was always the fool of the family," he angrily uttered: but at another time he would not have said it. "Well, we must see what can be done. Harsh measures, in these cases, seldom answer. I am much obliged to you, Rowley."

Harsh measures seldom do answer, and Mr. Lyvett was a better diplomatist. Within a day or two, it was known throughout the house that Mr. Frederick was fixed upon to go to Valparaiso. Lyvett, Castlerosse, and Lyvett were the agents for an important house there; and some business had arisen which rendered it expedient that one of the firm should proceed thither. This was actually the case, and Mr. Lyvett had been thinking of despatching his elder son.

Frederick Lyvett scarcely knew whether to be pleased or annoyed. When his father called him into his private room and blandly informed him that he and Mr. Castlerosse had come to the decision to despatch him on this important mission, he felt transfixed with wonder. Were there no Sophia May to intrude herself into his thoughts, he would have been gratified beyond measure. But a young man's desire for adventure overcame even his love: besides, he often heard Sophia sing the words "Absence makes the heart grow fonder," and believed it.

"You will have to be off to-morrow, Frederick."

"To-morrow!" repeated the startled young man.

"You must catch the out-going mail packet."

"But—but my traps, father! I must have an outfit."

"Oh, they are easily got together," said Mr. Lyvett. "You can do all that to-day."

And Frederick found it had to be so. He had barely time that night to wish his lady-love farewell, and to vow to her eternal fidelity. Away he went in high spirits; not a care or doubt on his mind as to the future.

His only remonstrance to his father had been in regard to his "traps," that there was not enough time to get them together. However, the time was made to be sufficient; and he and his traps were escorted by Mr. Lyvett himself to the port of embarkation, and on to the good ship, *The Skimmer of the South*, then making ready to put to sea. Fred never dreamt that he was sent away with a motive—that his father knew as much about his private affairs as himself.

Sophia May was stunned by the blow. A suspicion of the truth—that something had been discovered—lay upon her; and she fully

believed she had seen Fred Lyvett for the last time. It was very bitter. She had no love for Frederick Lyvett; but she missed his pleasant companionship; and she found all her golden visions, of rising in the world as his wife, suddenly flung to the winds. Yes, it was intensely bitter. Sophia sat down in her attic and cried many tears.

"What will become of me, now? I *can't* live on in this wretched place! Why was I ever born?"

On the return of Mr. Lyvett to London the porter and his wife were ordered into the presence of himself and of Mr. Castlerosse. They stood like culprits; Mrs. May attired in her choice black gown that she wore for cleaning, and her rusty black cap.

Mr. Lyvett sternly informed them that the fact of their having inveigled his son into a clandestine intimacy with their daughter was now known to him, and that Mr. Frederick's voyage to Valparaiso was undertaken to break off the disgrace. Terribly confused and ashamed, they knew not what to say, and in their perplexity they gathered what Mr. Lyvett had not intended to imply, for he was a man of strict veracity—namely, that Mr. Frederick was a party to the scheme, and that it was he, in especial, who wished to go away to rid himself of Sophia. The porter did venture upon a defence, as well as his confusion would allow—that Mr. Frederick had not not been "invaydled" at all; that he had took to come of his own accord, and said he *would* come, whether or no; and he, May, humbly hoped the gentlemen would condescend to pardon him and his wife for what warn't no fault of theirn. Mr. Lyvett's pardoning consisted in handing May a certain amount of wages in lieu of notice, and ordering them all three to be out of the house by five o'clock that evening.

"I don't know how we are to get another home," sobbed Mrs. May, descending to the kitchen, dissolved in grief. "Mr. Lyvett says that when anybody comes for a character he shall tell the reason we are sent off. Who will engage us, with a handsome girl, like you, Sophiar, on our hands, to turn young men's heads?"

"Who have done so much damage here," complained the unfortunate porter. For indeed this was a most overwhelming blow, and he could only regard his daughter as the cause of it.

"I thought it was not all sure," sighed poor Mrs. May. "When a gentleman, whose family keeps their carriages, and footmen in silk stockings, comes to lower himself down to his own servants and sit with them in their kitchen, amongst the dirty ashes, as it were, from the up-stairs fires, it's not to be expected but what he *will* take himself away. He admired Sophiar, as was easy to be seen, and I'm sure he was a well-meaning, honourable gentleman, without a ill thought; but that was all. And I declare I don't know which is the most to blame, him or us."

"This is not packing up," sullenly interposed the porter.

"*I* can't pack up," returned Mrs. May, "I am too much shook. Whatever is to be done with the pianer?"

"They must fetch it away, wife. There ain't nothing else for it."

"Oh!" groaned Mrs. May, "I wish I was dead."

"Much use it is, wishing that," said the porter. "I'd recommend you to turn and pack up instead. If the things bain't in the cart by five o'clock, we shall have 'em thrown in for us. I know our master; he sticks to his word when he's roused. You'd better begin with them pots and pans. They can go in that empty case."

Mrs. May dried her eyes, and slowly rose. "Come, Sophiar," she said, "you must lend a helping hand to-day."

"I!" returned Sophia, sobbing out her contempt. "*I* lend a helping hand with pots and pans! You couldn't expect me to do it, mother. I will pack my own things: and glad enough I shall be to do it, and be away from this place; but I can't touch kettles and saucepans. I've never done any hard work in all my life; you know I have not."

Mrs. May sighed. True: Sophia had been taught to exercise her fingers on the piano, not on domestic work.

"Perhaps you could put my clothes up as well as yours, child," she ventured to say. "I'm sure I don't know how in the world we shall get through all, and be away by five!"

Sophia got up from her chair in the corner, and sailed out of the kitchen. The porter departed to secure two rooms, which, as he chanced to know, were to let in the neighbourhood, and to bring in help to get away their goods in time. Later in the day, when they were engaged in the attics taking down the bedsteads, and Sophia was in the kitchen alone, somebody dashed in at the door. It was Mr. Jones, whom we once saw just after he was articled. His articles were done with now. But he remained in the office at a good salary, hoping a vague hope that he might sometime see on the door-posts "Lyvett, Castlerosse Lyvett, and Jones." Mr. Jones had good private expectations, and his family and the Lyvetts were on friendly terms.

"My *dear* Miss May! I have so longed for a little conversation with you, and now that puppy, Fred Lyvett's out of the way, I ——"

"What?" said Sophia, turning on him no pleasant expression.

"I admire you immensely, my dear Miss May, and ——"

"Then take that," answered Sophia, dashing over him the contents of a wooden bowl, a compound of grease and damp coffee-grounds.

Mr. Jones stepped back amid the débris of the kitchen furniture, now preparing for its removal. Considerably more crest-fallen than he ever remembered to have been, he retreated up the stairs, wondering how on earth he should get his hat out of the office, and hide his shirt-front from the clerks. At the turn of the landing he met Mrs. May, carrying down some bed-posts.

"Sakes alive, sir!" she uttered in astonishment, "whatever is the matter? I never saw anybody in such a pickle in my life."

"You may well ask what it is, Dame May!" spluttered Mr. Jones. "It is the work of your daughter. I addressed a polite word to her as civilly as I could speak it, and she flung this poison over me—or whatever it is. It's well for the house that it's going to have a clearance."

"What did you do that for, Sophiar?" demanded Mrs. May, when she reached the kitchen.

"Do what?"

"That to Mr. Jones."

"Because I pleased to do it."

"Whatever shall we do with you if you are to behave like this?" cried poor Mrs. May. "Your temper is upset to-day, Sophiar."

"I have had enough to upset it," replied Sophia. "But I will not trouble you long, mother. I have been thinking of matters upstairs, and my mind is made up. Your home and father's will never be any fit home for me, so I must leave it and go out in the world."

"As lady's maid?" briskly responded Mrs. May.

"No. As governess. I will enter some nobleman's family."

"A nobleman's family, child!—what, a lord's?"

"Why not?" coolly asked Sophia.

"Oh, but don't you see," spoke Mrs. May, "how things would be against it? *You* can never get admittance to a lord's family as governess, Sophiar. They want real ladies for governesses, lords do: leastways those that have had different beginnings from ours. Why, when they came for what they call references, and found us what we are, me and your father living in a kitchen, and all that, no lord would think you good enough to teach his children."

Sophia's life was rather a mortified life just then. She recognised the doubt at least as forcibly as her mother.

"We should never have wanted you to go out at all, child, never; not as lady's maid, or anything; only your Aunt Foxaby got thinking afore you came home that you'd not like to live in these kitchens, brought up so superior. But if you *could* reconcile yourself to stay with us, Sophiar, why you'd just be the comfort of me and of your father. We've got but you."

"Now, mother, could you expect it?"

Mrs. May sighed. Had they been making a mistake all along?

"There seems to be only one course open to me," observed Sophia; "that of going out as governess. It shall be in a high family, or not at all."

"It can never be a lord's, child, I'm afraid."

"You will see," returned Sophia.

CHAPTER IV.

AT PARKWATER.

THE beams of a September sun, drawing near its setting, were falling on the mansion pertaining to a well-cultivated estate in one of the better parts of Ireland. The house was not erected in a critical style of architecture, for it was a straggling, in-and-out sort of building, that seemed to have been added-to indiscriminately at different times—a room here, a room there; but the scenery around was beautiful. It was called Parkwater. At the window of one of the reception-rooms, gazing at an approaching car, stood a pretty, quiet-looking lady, unassuming in face as in dress. She appeared a simple-hearted, cordial woman, quite devoid of pretence and affectation; and such she was. It was Lady Tennygal.

She had dined in the middle of the day with her children. She was devoted to them; and when her lord was absent, she was apt to forget pomp and state. Lady Tennygal was expecting the arrival of the new governess to her little girls, and had hospitably thought she would wait tea for her: no doubt this car contained the lady. The Countess rang the bell.

"Reed, show that lady in to me at once. I think it is the governess."

"Yes, my lady."

A minute or two, and the same man threw the door open for the governess. A tall, fair girl with a handsome face. The countenance had, however, a peculiar expression; very determined, and not always pleasing.

"Miss May, my lady."

Miss May came forward, her head erect, and her air consequential. One might have deemed, indeed, that she was the lady and the other the governess. She dropped a ceremonious curtsey, very low, just as you may have seen from a Frenchwoman.

"Have I the honour of addressing Lady Tennygal?"

The Countess inclined her head. "An uncompromising-looking young woman," she thought to herself, "but that's all proper, I suppose, for a governess. Allow me to welcome you to Parkwater, Miss May," she said, aloud. "I hope you will find your residence here agreeable."

"Madam, I thank you for your kind wishes. I trust I shall perform my duties to your satisfaction."

"And when you have taken off your things, which I daresay you are anxious to do, we will have tea," said the pleasant little Countess, "and you shall see your pupils. I thought we would take tea together this evening, that we might grow acquainted with each other. I have the children very much with me when Lord Tennygal is absent."

Miss May was shown to her rooms. When she returned from them

she was rather finer than the Countess—taking in the general effect of her appearance; and her flaxen hair was dressed in elaborate braids. "Too *pretentious* for a governess," was the idea that crossed Lady Tennygal's mind; "I wonder whether she is quite a gentlewoman?" The next moment she took herself to task; as she was sure to do, if her kind heart gave momentary vent to an ill-natured thought.

"Here are your two little girls, Miss May: Lady Laura and Lady Rose. My dear children, I am sure you will welcome your governess, and tell her you are glad to see her."

They advanced and put out their hands: pretty children of nine and ten, and well-behaved.

"Mais, elles ne sont pas ——" began Miss May, and then pulled herself up hastily. "I beg your ladyship's pardon; I have been so much accustomed to converse in French, that I occasionally run into it when I ought not. I was about to ask if these two young ladies were all."

"All!" laughed the Countess, "all the children! There are six more, younger than they are. The last is only three months old—such a little darling! These are all who will be under your care at present. I hope you will bring them on well."

"Papa says we are backward," interrupted Laura.

"Oh, yes. Lord Tennygal is very clever himself, and he thinks the children ought to be. I tell him there's quite time enough."

"He has been away ever so long, papa has," cried little Rose.

"Nearly nine weeks," added the communicative Countess to Miss May. "He has been out yachting with some friends in the Mediterranean. But he is in Dublin now, and will be home in a day or two."

"Uncle Tody is coming with him," said Lady Rose, "and he is going to bring me a real live Venetian doll in a gondola. He said so."

"I have not yet inquired what sort of a journey you have had, Miss May," said the Countess. "Was the sea rough?"

Before Miss May could answer, the sound of a carriage was heard, and the children left their tea and ran to the window to look at it.

"Mamma!" screamed the children in delight, "it is papa!"

"Never!" cried the Countess, running also to look. "Oh, how glad I am! That's just like him, Miss May; he loves to take us by surprise."

The Earl of Tennygal came in. A small, fair man, as good-natured as his wife. She met him in the doorway, received his embrace, and then flew upstairs to carry down the baby herself, and tell the other children that papa was come. Miss May had risen, and the Earl bowed to her, wondering what visitor his wife had, staying with her.

"Now who is going to be mistress of the ceremonies and introduce me?" said he to the little girls, as he stood before the stranger, with a genial smile. "Mamma seems to have flown away."

"She came this evening; she is our new governess."

"Hush, Rose," cried the more dignified Laura. "Papa, it is Miss May."

Rose thought that quite enough. She pulled his arm to draw his attention. "Papa, why did not Uncle Tody come?"

"Uncle Tody is gone to London, Rose."

"And taken my doll and gondola with him?" Rose seemed to think much of this "Uncle Tody."

"That lady in the drawing-room took me by surprise, Bessie," remarked the Earl to his wife, as they strolled out together after tea. "Rose gave me the imformation that she was a 'new governess.'"

"So she is. I sent you word that I had engaged one when I wrote to—where was it?—Sicily."

"Did you? I do not remember it."

"Yes, I did. Do you think she looks as if she would suit?"

"Dear Bessie, that's one of your fallacies—judging by 'looks.' Did you engage this one for her looks?"

"I never saw her until this evening. Why?" added the Countess, with quick apprehension. "Do you not like her looks?"

"Oh, her looks are well enough: if her capabilities equal them, she'll do. She does not think a little of herself, I can see that. Where did you get her from?"

"I wrote to London, to Lady Langton. She heard of her through an agency, I think. I left it all to Lady Langton. Miss May's style of playing is good, I am told, and her French that of a native."

"Um!" said the Earl. "What of her English?"

"Oh, Frank! you speak as if you did not think well of it."

"I fancy her tone—her accent, perhaps I should rather say—is not quite as pure and perfect as it might be. It does not give one the idea that she has mixed in good society."

Now, Lady Tennygal had a doubt on her mind that she had noticed the same. But she had entire faith in Lady Langton. "Perhaps we may be mistaken, Frank dear," she said. "I do so hope she will suit."

"So do I, I am sure," assented the good-natured Earl. "Is she a gentlewoman, Bessie?"

"Oh, yes."

"Who are her friends?"

"Solicitors; eminent solicitors. That is, her father was. He is dead, I think. I will find Lady Langton's letters for you. I know my letter to Miss May, the one I wrote to ratify the agreement, was addressed to the care of Lyvett, Castlerosse, and Lyvett, a first-rate legal firm of long standing, Lady Langton says, and they strongly recommended her."

"Lyvett, Castlerosse, and Lyvett!" repeated the Earl. "I know the firm well by reputation: most honourable practitioners. If they

answer for Miss May, it is all right. Do you give her a high salary, Bessie?"

"Oh no; very reasonable indeed. Only £40. But she is young, and has not been out before. I think she will suit, Frank: but of course there's no telling without a trial.—So Theodore has not come with you?"

"He will be here, I expect, in a few days. He was obliged to go on to London to see about one or two matters there; *pressing* ones, Bessie. Tody has been at the old game again. I don't wonder your father is sick and tired of paying his debts for him."

"Poor fellow! He is so good-natured."

"Not much of that. He is reckless-natured, if you like. To squander away his money, and leave his just debts unpaid, is not being what I call good-natured. From London, Tody goes down to see Sir Archibald: but as to his getting from him what he wants, I am sure he won't; and Tody knows it."

"Papa said, the last time, that he would never set him straight again," observed Lady Tennygal.

"The fact is, Bessie, he has said it so frequently, and *had* to say it so frequently, that it falls on Tody's ears unheeded. But he got a sharp, determined letter from Sir Archibald the day before he left the yacht."

"Oh, did he? What did papa say in it?"

"It was to the effect that he would advance no more money; and if Tody went to prison, there he might stop. Tody had been writing to Sir Archibald that he was in imminent danger of arrest."

"What will he do? How I wish we were rich!"

"If we were as rich as the Indies, and could hand Tody a blank cheque to be filled up at will, it would be doing him no kindness, for he is only pulled out of one scrape to walk into another. It will take £2,000 now to set him only tolerably clear."

"Oh, Frank! Do you know how he is going to manage?"

"I know what he says: but if Tody says one thing to-day, he says another to-morrow. He means, in the first place, to have a rake at Sir Archibald—that is not my expression, Bessie; it is his—and get himself freed from one or two things that he *must* get himself freed from. So much, perhaps, Sir Archibald will do; for they are very bad."

"What are they?" hastily inquired Lady Tennygal.

"My dear, I cannot explain them to you; you would not understand them. Tody is in a mess; and that's all you need trouble yourself to know."

"What has it to do with?—this that is so bad?"

"Oh, it has to do with bills. Never you mind. He has been in a mess before, and he will be in one again, or else it would not be Tody Devereux. Sir Archibald, no doubt, will help him out of *that*, but no

further. And then Tody proposes to come over here, and lie perdu with us, while he considers how he is to get on his legs again."

"I have always thought it a pity he sold out."

"He could not keep in. He would have been sent to Coventry. You know it was not once, or twice, or three times, that Tody was in for it, but always. And some things got to the Colonel's ears—if they did not get to the Commander-in-Chief's,—and altogether there was no other resource. Besides, he was compelled to turn the proceeds into money, and make stop-gaps of it."

"Still, if he could have kept his commission ——"

"But he could not," interrupted Lord Tennygal. "My dear Bessie, Tody is your brother, and I am sorry to speak harshly of him, but he is just a vagabond, and that's the best that can be said."

A few days passed on. Miss May set to her duties with a will. How she had contrived to enter this family was best known to herself; but, being in it, she resolved to try and please. The departure of Frederick Lyvett lay on her still as a bitter blow, a terrible check to the ambitious views she had begun to cherish. However, if she could but continue in these high families, she hoped to meet with some one as eligible as he, who would fall in love with her and raise her by marriage to his own rank.

The little girls, Laura and Rose, took to her very kindly; Lady Tennygal was charmed with her playing and singing, and all parties were satisfied. Miss May, perhaps, would have been better satisfied had Parkwater been more lively. It might have been a desert, for all the company she saw; and she could not understand a lord and a lady living so quietly in regard to household arrangements.

On the first Sunday, as they were walking home across the park after morning service, Lord Tennygal suddenly addressed his wife:

"Is that governess of yours an Englishwoman, Bessie?"

"Certainly. Why?"

"Because she uses a French prayer-book in church."

"No!" uttered Lady Tennygal, in an accent of disbelief.

"She used one this morning. I saw it in her hand. And ——"

"Mamma!" cried little Rose, running up, her whole air, eyes, lips, one picture of admiring awe — "mamma, only think! Miss May's book is not a common book like ours: it is all in French; every bit. How I wish I was clever enough to have a French prayer-book!"

"That's corroborative testimony," laughed Lord Tennygal. "I don't know how you will get over the dilemma," he added to his wife, in an under and more serious tone. "It is a pity the children observed it. You cannot well speak against their governess to them: but you cannot allow their minds to retain the favourable impression that French prayer-books seems to have made."

The kind face of Lady Tennygal wore a vexed expression. "How could Miss May evince so much bad taste?"

"I don't think 'taste' is quite the right word," remarked Lord Tennygal. "Mark me, Bessie, this proves that the young lady's mind has not been altogether well trained: I doubt whether her talents have. Nobody ever took a French prayer-book to our service but from one motive—display. And a well-educated woman knows that she has no need of that. I should say Miss May is much more superficially acquainted with French than you suspect, or she would not seek to parade it."

At this moment they turned an angle of the walk, and came face to face with a gentleman; a tall, dark man, with a profusion of black hair and whiskers, black eyes that seemed to pierce you in a disagreeable manner, and a too free, but at the same time an ill-tempered cast of countenance. Some people would have shrunk from him instinctively; some might have called him handsome. He was undoubtedly a fine man as to figure, towering a head and shoulders above Lord Tennygal. It was Captain Devereux, brother to Lady Tennygal, but several years older; and no two faces, and no two individuals, could be much less alike.

"Theodore!" uttered Lady Tennygal, in an accent of surprise.

"What! have you arrived?" exclaimed the Earl. "How well you kept your promise of writing!"

"Aw—I had nothing good to write," said the new-comer, speaking in a very affected and untrue tone of voice. "I got here two hours ago, and saw you all filing off to church. What a thundering long sermon you must have had inflicted on you! I wonder you could sit it out!"

"Do not forget our old bargain, Theodore," hastily interrupted Lady Tennygal: "no irreverent speaking before the children."

"Oh, it's Uncle Tody," exclaimed Rose, running to him. "Uncle Tody, where's my live doll?"

"She died on the voyage."

"It's not true," said Rose.

"It is. She was sea-sick."

The child looked very hard of belief. "Then, where's the gondola?"

"Oh, that has sailed away."

Rose turned away in supreme indignation. "Mamma, did you ever know Uncle Tody bring us anything that he promised? It is always the same."

"Uncle Tody" was no longer attending to Rose: his notice was given to the handsome girl who was walking up with Laura. She wore a lilac silk dress and a showy shawl; and he thought, as Lord Tennygal had first done, that it was a visitor. Having a propensity for admiring all the handsome girls that came in his way, Captain Devereux

lifted his hat. Strictly speaking, he was no longer Captain Devereux, as he had sold out; but habit made the title familiar. Lord Tennygal linked his arm within his brother-in-law's, and drew him on.

"Stop a bit, Tennygal. Who's that?"

"Nobody that need concern you. The governess. How have you managed over yonder?"

"I have not managed at all," was the reply, accompanied by an oath. In those days swearing was thought fashionable, and Captain Devereux kept the fashion up.

"Not managed at all? I suppose you mean with your father."

"The old man stands out; he won't advance a stiver. I think he would have done something, but my temper got up, and we came to hard words."

"Your temper often gets up when it ought to keep down," remarked Lord Tennygal. "Well?"

"There was nothing left for me but to make my escape. And, by Jove! I can't feel sure, Tennygal, that I shall not be followed here. Once let the confounded foxes get the scent, and I'm done for."

"And what, I ask, do you mean to do?"

"I have been turning it over in my mind, and I think a good plan would be for you to write to the old man ——"

"I will not interfere between you and Sir Archibald," interrupted the Earl.

"You won't?"

"I won't. I have no right to do so, and it might make it unpleasant for Bessie."

"Then Bessie shall. He'll listen to her: as he would to you. But he won't to me."

"Bessie must do as she thinks best. I will not control her. But were she of my opinion, she would remain neuter."

"What the plague am I to do?" was the angry rejoinder. "These confounded matters must be settled, and with speed too; you know that. Why should you put the check on Bessie's trying to win over Sir Archibald?"

"I don't put it on. I said I would not control her. But these things are not of a nature that you can explain to my wife."

"Of course I am not going to give the details to her."

"But they must be given to Sir Archibald. It is only the dire necessity that will induce him to listen at all."

"You ought to help me with him, Tennygal," was the rejoinder.

"Nonsense, man! Write a proper statement to Sir Archibald—properly worded, I mean, and apologising for your temper—and crave his assistance, so far as that you cannot do without it. That's the best thing to do. We will talk it over to-morrow. And, look here—don't call him the 'old man' to Bessie. She does not like it. It savours

of disrespect: and your father is not old yet. Come in now, Devereux, and take some luncheon."

Rose still harped upon her wrongs, enlightening the governess as to the ever non-fulfilment of the promises as to live dolls and gondolas.

"Don't you think it is a great shame of Uncle Tody, Miss May?"

"Perhaps it was not his fault," suggested the governess. "What is your uncle's name?"

"Why, it's Uncle Tody."

"But his other name?"

"Captain Devereux," said Laura. "He is mamma's brother."

"He is not a real captain now, you know, because he has no men to command," interposed Rose. "Grandpapa was so angry with him."

"Who is your grandpapa, Lady Laura?" inquired the governess.

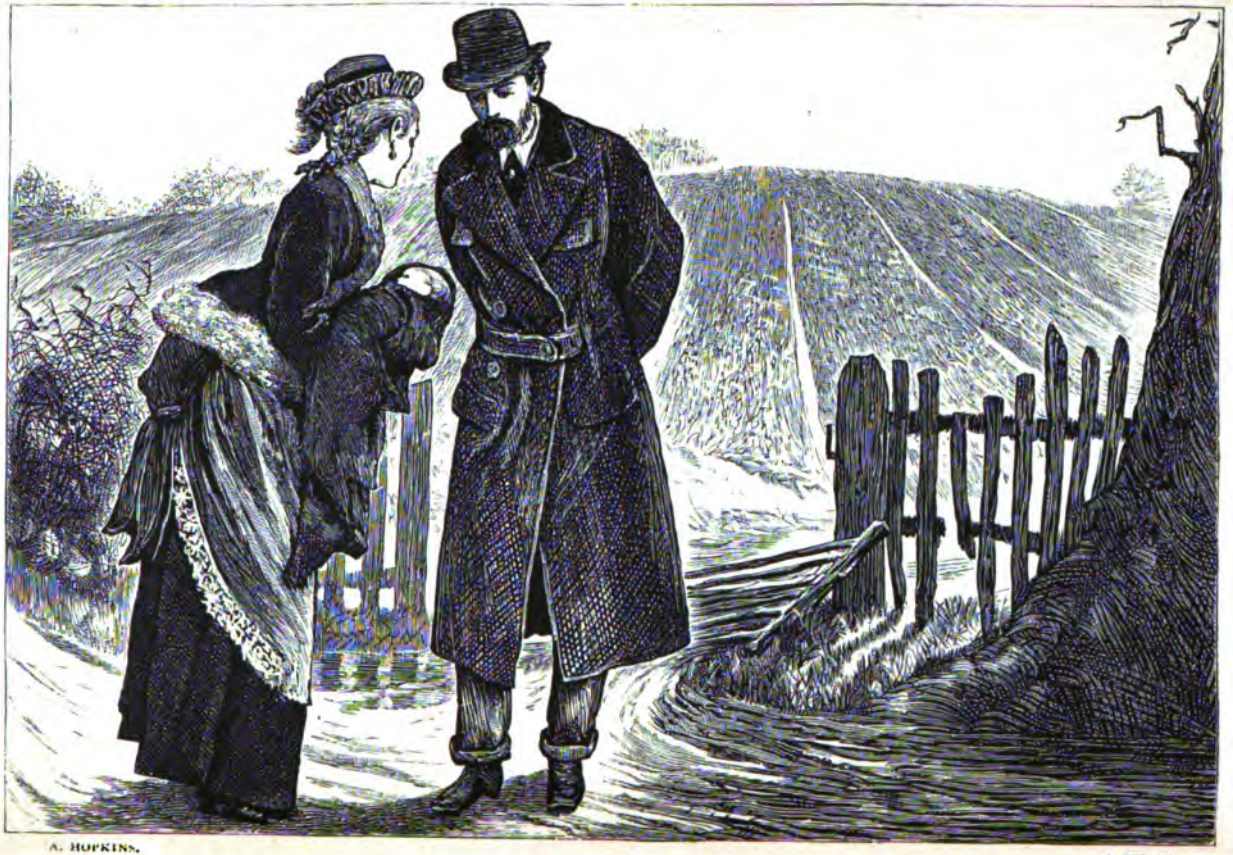
"Sir Archibald Devereux. He is one of the Queen's Officers of State, and he makes laws."

With the last piece of information the children were called to be made ready for their dinner, which they took at the luncheon-table. As did the governess, Miss May did not exchange a word with Captain Devereux, but he glanced at her often with his black eyes. Afterwards, when she was alone in her sitting-room, she unlocked her desk and took out a French book. Sophia did well to keep it, and all such books, locked up: it would have astonished Lady Tennygal had she seen them at Parkwater. The governess appeared, however, to find amusement in it, for she sat reading it till the bells rang out for afternoon service.

"Those droning bells again!" was her grumbling ejaculation. "Of course I shall be expected to attend—and not a creature to look at one except parish rustics! Had I known this was such a wretched, out-of-the-world neighbourhood, I might not have been so eager to get to it."

Miss May was right: she was expected to attend. But she appeared with an English prayer-book, the gift of Lady Tennygal: who, in presenting it, had made a special request that the French one might be put away out of sight, and never be taken to church at Parkwater again. Sophia wished the church at Hanover, or as much farther off as it could be induced to go. She foresaw, indeed, that she should lead but a dull life of it at Parkwater. Sober routine was not congenial to her, she feared. As to this gentleman, Captain Devereux, who had enlivened their dulness to-day, she supposed he had but come on a very temporary visit, and that the probability was she should not exchange a word with him while he stayed. But she would have liked to well enough. He struck her as being quite a noble-looking man, especially by the side of that shrimp, Lord Tennygal: and she at least did not see anything to dislike in his manners or expression. I said before that some people did not: rather the contrary: and Miss May was one.

(*To be continued.*)



A. HOPKINS. J. SWAIN.

DESERTED.

THE ARGOSY.

MARCH, 1875.

A SECRET OF THE SEA.

By the Author of "In the Dead of Night."

CHAPTER VII.

MISS DEANE FINDS A NEW HOME.

WHEN Matthew Kelvin reached home from his journey he was certainly surprised at the budget of news which his mother had ready for him. "Where's Olive?" was the first question he asked, as he sat down to his dinner, after kissing his mother, and satisfying himself that she was no worse in health than when he left her.

"She's gone to see the Leightons, and won't be back till to-morrow, so that I shall have my dear boy all to myself this evening. It was very considerate of Olive, I must say."

Mrs. Kelvin was a handsome, stately old lady, with silvery hair and gold-rimmed spectacles. She wore a richly brocaded dress, a China crape shawl—even in the house she always wore a shawl—and a black lace cap of elaborate construction. To see her sitting in her easy chair by the fire, no one would have suspected her of being an invalid; but for many years past she had suffered from a spinal complaint which almost entirely disabled her from walking.

"But we shall soon lose Olive now," added Mrs. Kelvin, a moment or two later.

"Indeed! how's that?" asked Kelvin, indifferently.

"She is going to Stammars as governess to Lady Dudgeon's two little girls. At her own terms, too: a hundred guineas a year."

"Well done, Olive!" cried the lawyer. "A clever girl, very; but I'm afraid that she and Lady Dudgeon won't agree long together."

"She may perhaps have a private reason of her own for so readily accepting Lady Dudgeon's offer. Mind, dear, I only say she may have; I don't say she has."

Matthew Kelvin knew that it was expected of him to show some

curiosity in the matter. "Shall I be set down as unduly inquisitive," he said, "if I ask you to tell me what you suppose this private reason to be?"

"I think it quite possible that Olive may be willing to go to Stammars, because—well, because Mr. Pomeroy will be there also." Mrs. Kelvin drew her shawl round her with quite a relish, and shook her head meaningly at her son.

"Because Mr. Pomeroy will be there also!" said Mr. Kelvin, like a man who could hardly believe his ears. "Who says that Mr. Pomeroy is going to Stammars?" In the pressure of far more important matters, he had almost forgotten the existence of an individual of so little consequence as Jack Pomeroy.

"Why, Matthew, dear, I thought it was all arranged that as soon as you came home, Mr. Pomeroy was to be made Sir Thomas Dudgeon's secretary or something of that kind, and Olive and I have advanced him fifty pounds to provide him with an outfit. You know you told me yourself that you didn't suppose he had a shilling in the world."

It tested all Mr. Kelvin's powers of self-control to keep down an explosion of temper. He remembered in time that any outbreak on his part would be sure to upset his mother and make her ill for several days, so for a minute or two he did not speak. He put down his knife and fork and sipped at his claret as if in deep thought.

"Fifty pounds is a great deal of money, mother," he said at last.

"It is a great deal of money, Matthew, of course; but Mr. Pomeroy understands that he is to pay the amount back out of his salary."

"The whole affair seems to be cut and dried, and I have not even spoken to Sir Thomas about the man!" he said, not without a touch of impatience. "For aught I know to the contrary, Sir Thomas may have filled up the situation himself, while I have been away."

"I am sorry, dear, if I have done anything against your wishes; but really I thought I was managing everything for the best."

Matthew Kelvin could see a tear in a corner of his mother's eye, and he could not bear that. "There—there—mother, don't put yourself out of the way," he said. "Fifty pounds won't ruin us, even though we should never get a penny of it back."

"But Mr. Pomeroy was such a nice young man!" continued Mrs. Kelvin. "So good-looking and well educated, so gentlemanly in every way."

"Some of the most unmitigated scamps I have ever met with, were very nice young men indeed," returned Matthew. "Not that I know anything to Pomeroy's discredit: at the same time, I know nothing very greatly to his credit. He has been a Bohemian—a wanderer to and fro on the face of the earth for years, and to introduce such a man, about whom, be it remembered, I know absolutely nothing, into the household of Sir Thomas Dudgeon, is a serious responsibility."

"Oh, I believe Olive satisfied herself thoroughly as to the respectability both of Mr. Pomeroy and his connections."

Mr. Kelvin smiled grimly at the idea of Olive Deane getting more information about himself out of Jack Pomeroy than that individual was inclined to give; but, as we have already seen, Olive never troubled herself with any such useless details. "If women would but refrain from meddling with matters that they don't understand, what a blessing it would be!" said Kelvin to himself.

"What was it that you said just now about Olive and this fellow Pomeroy?" he asked, presently.

"Why, simply this: that I rather fancy Olive has contracted a penchant in that quarter. It is simply my fancy, and I may be quite mistaken."

Mr. Kelvin shrugged his shoulders. "Of course she is old enough to choose for herself," he said, "and, as a rule, I think she is quite capable of taking care of herself; but if she should ever fall in love, I should like it to be with a man that one knows something about, and not with a mere adventurer."

"I can't help thinking that you are a little too hard on Mr. Pomeroy. It is a long time since I was so taken with anyone as I was with him. A modest, sensible, well-informed young man, I set him down as: and a gentleman withal, or else I don't know what a gentleman is."

"I suppose we men of law see with different spectacles from anybody else," said Matthew. "Suspicion is part of our stock-in-trade."

"I was certainly very much taken with Mr. Pomeroy," returned Mrs. Kelvin. "But at the same time my suspicion with regard to Olive made me interest myself more in his case than I should otherwise have done."

Mrs. Kelvin was not a woman to readily abandon any point that she had set her mind on carrying. Before bidding her son good-night she won from him a promise that he would do his best to obtain for Mr. Pomeroy the coveted situation.

Olive Deane was quite aware that her cousin would be greatly annoyed when he came to ascertain what had been done during his absence, and she wisely left to his mother the task of telling him. Certainly she would have been anything but satisfied—anything but pleased—had she heard the conversation between her aunt and her cousin. The reference to a possible liking on her part for Pomeroy would have touched her pride to the quick. Very, very different was the feeling at work deep down in her heart.

Mrs. Kelvin, in fact, had been altogether mistaken with regard to the reasons which had induced Olive to accept the situation of governess to Lady Dudgeon's children. Olive had no option but to accept it—or felt that she had not. When Lady Dudgeon made her the offer, and when her aunt said, "It would be a capital situation for you, and were

I you I should certainly accept it," Olive felt that she was not at liberty to do otherwise—not at liberty to live an idle life any longer. She had always given her aunt to understand that she was merely taking a few weeks' rest before looking out for another situation: here was an excellent situation ready to her hand: how was it possible that she should refuse it?

And yet—and yet no one but herself knew how bitter it was to her to have to quit that roof: no one but herself knew how infinitely sweet to her had been those few weeks of sojourn with her cousin and her aunt! She had loved Matthew Kelvin with an undivided love from the time when, as girl and boy, they had played together. It was a love that had grown with her growth and had rooted itself more firmly in her heart with each passing year. She was clear-sighted enough to know that never since the time of that brief, romantic episode at Redcar, when she had had him all to herself for a blissful fortnight, had Matthew Kelvin felt for her anything warmer than a mere cousinly, or, at the most, a quiet, brotherly affection. She was sufficiently versed in worldly knowledge to be aware that the chances that she, a poor governess, neither very young nor very handsome, should ever become the wife of her ambitious, well-to-do cousin were about as remote as it was possible for them to be. And yet, for all that, a dim, faint hope had always held possession of her heart—so dim and so faint that she herself seemed to be hardly aware of its existence—that among the unknown chances and changes of the future—that out of the involvement and evolution of the great unrehearsed drama of life, with its unforeseen exits and entrances, such a happy climax might somehow—she could not tell how—be brought about. She had got into the way of looking upon her cousin as a man not likely to marry. If this view of his character struck the foundation from her own hopes, it seemed to preclude fear from any other quarter. When, therefore, Matthew told her the story of his love for, and rejection by, Eleanor Lloyd, it came upon her with all the force of an astounding revelation. Happily there seemed no likelihood of Miss Lloyd altering her determination not to accept Mr. Kelvin; therefore, as far as she—Olive—was concerned, she would not look upon the campaign as entirely lost even now. Many a husband has been won through his rejection by a rival. Men at such times are prone to seek the first pleasant shelter that offers itself to them. They want to lie quiet and heal them of their wounds; and there are plenty of women in the world ready to act the part of physician to the wounds inflicted by another, provided only that the wounded knight will agree to wear no other gage than theirs in time to come.

Such a physician would Olive gladly have become, rather than lose her knight, if he would but have consented to such a method of treatment. But Mr. Kelvin was no soft-hearted swain who thinks the world s no longer good for anything because a certain pair of white arms

refuse to coil themselves round his neck. It is true that he had told her of his wounds, but he had expressed no desire to be healed of them; he had given Olive no encouragement whatever to offer herself as his nurse. He had expressed himself very bitterly with regard to the person who had so wounded him, and Olive had done her best to intensify that bitterness: but that was all. She felt that she was not one step nearer the capture of her cousin's heart than on that day, now several weeks ago, when he had first told her of his love for Miss Lloyd. But was that love really dead? Was it not, unknown to himself, still smouldering in his heart, ready at the slightest provocation to burst into a flame tenfold more ardent than before? She felt instinctively that no other woman would ever become the wife of Matthew Kelvin so long as Eleanor Lloyd remained unmarried, and this feeling it was that was at the bottom of the plot for inducing Gerald Warburton to make love to her. That dangerous rival once out of the way for ever, Olive's ambitious scheme would not look so entirely hopeless as it did just now.

Chagrined as Olive was at having to quit her cousin's roof with the hidden purpose of her life no nearer its accomplishment than before, she yet acknowledged to herself that she would much rather go to Stammars than anywhere else. She had all a woman's curiosity to see that other woman about whom she had been told so much, and who had been in her thoughts, day and night, ever since she had heard the first mention of her name. At Stammars, too, she would have an opportunity of seeing Matthew now and then when he came there to visit Sir Thomas on business. Then, she would be on the spot, ready, with deft fingers, to tie up any threads of her plot which might be accidentally broken, or to hasten Gerald's footsteps along the path she wanted him to tread, should it prove needful to do so. In any case, she need not stay there longer than was necessary for the carrying out of her own views. At any time she could pick a quarrel with Lady Dudgeon, throw up her situation, and go back for a while to the shelter of her aunt's roof.

Five days after her cousin's return, Olive Deane found herself duly installed in her new home, and two days after that Mr. John Pomeroy made his appearance at Stammars.

Mr. Kelvin, despite his irritation and chagrin at what had taken place during his absence, did not fail to carry out the promise he had made to his mother. The situation was still open, and Sir Thomas at once promised it to Pomeroy. Then Kelvin wrote to the latter, telling him when he would be expected at Stammars, but not in any way alluding to the loan of fifty pounds. As a matter of course, on passing through Pembridge, Gerald called to see Kelvin, but the lawyer was not at home—purposely. He had done his duty by his mother, but he had no wish to see the man who had caused him so much

annoyance: he only hoped that Pomeroy would do nothing to disgrace his recommendation. For the present he washed his hands of him.

Mr. Kelvin had not been without his own thoughts all this time as to the course he had taken at Olive's suggestion in keeping from Miss Lloyd the contents of the sealed packet sent him by Miss Bellamy. He was not usually a man whose mind vacillated with regard to any of his intentions or purposes. "There's no shilly-shallying about Matthew," his mother would often say. "When he sees his point he goes straight at it: fire and water would hardly keep him back."

But in this matter of the sealed packet he did shilly-shally painfully, blowing hot and cold by turns, making up his mind one day that he would tell everything, and being as steadfastly determined the next that he would do nothing of the kind. He was not unaware of the meanness of what he was doing; it was altogether foreign to his notions of right and wrong, to act with anything but the strictest honour towards his clients, rich or poor. Still, about this particular case there was something so exceptional as to remove it out of the ordinary category of purely professional business—that is what he said to himself: but the real reason was that his own feelings were more deeply interested than they had ever been before. Under such circumstances it is by no means difficult to argue oneself into the belief that although the action on which we are engaged may not be positively meritorious, it is, at least, one from which no one will suffer. "I am only doing Miss Lloyd a negative wrong," Kelvin would sometimes say to himself. "If anything, she ought to thank me for keeping the secret from her as long as possible." Having put off the revelation for so long a time, he shrank more than ever from telling her now. One morning on getting up he would swear to himself that he had never loved Eleanor Lloyd as he loved her now: next morning he would vow that he had never hated any human being as he hated her. He had been rendered very wretched by Miss Lloyd's rejection of his suit; but with all his unhappiness he had never till now lost his own sense of self-respect: not that he would have admitted for a single moment that he had so lost it. He made believe, even to himself, that it was still as safely in his possession as ever it had been. But the acute consciousness of its loss which came over him at odd times—only to be at once thrust into the background with a firm hand—by no means tended to mitigate the intensity of his determination to be avenged, in one form or another, on the woman to whom he owed this strange new feeling, which not seldom made him shrink within himself, as though he were in reality little better than a whipped cur.

Stammars, the residence of Sir Thomas Dudgeon, was, as a family mansion, still quite in its infancy, being something under twenty years old. Sir Thomas had stuck to the old house as long as it was safe for him to do so; but when, during a night of terrible storm, a great part of

it was blown about his ears, he began to see that it would not be advisable to delay his removal much longer. So, on a windy knoll about half a mile from the old house, the new mansion was built. It was built with all modern conveniences and appliances. The rooms were all large and lofty, and had huge plate-glass windows with venetian blinds. Round about were gardens, and shrubberies, and hothouses, with a view beyond over miles of pleasant Hertfordshire scenery. Everybody expressed themselves as being enchanted with the house, and yet everybody felt that it lacked one essential. There was no homelike comfort about it. Whether it was that the rooms were too big and the fire-places too few; whether it was that the house was built so high above the surrounding country as to be exposed to every wind that blew, and so had never been able to get itself warmed through; or from whatever other cause it might arise, certain it is that Stammars never seemed otherwise than cold and comfortless. Each room in the house seemed to have its own particular draught, while the wind seemed to be for ever playing at hide-and-seek up and down the great wide corridors and staircases, banging every now and then a bedroom door, or creeping with snake-like motion under any piece of carpet that had not been firmly nailed down.

The old mansion of Stammars had dated back for upwards of four centuries, and had originally been the home of the Fyzackerleys, one of the most ancient families in the county. So ancient, indeed, had the Fyzackerleys at length become that they had died out, and the estate had been brought to the hammer. The fortunate purchaser was the present Sir Thomas's grandfather, at that time a sugar refiner in the Minories, and some five years subsequently Lord Mayor of London. While filling the latter office he had the good fortune to be knighted, and later still by two or three years he was created a baronet. Why such an honour had been conferred on the worthy but obscure sugar refiner, no one seemed to know. There was some question about it at the time, and certain people went so far as to whisper that the baronetcy had been given in return for a loan of twenty thousand pounds made to a certain august personage, who would have found repayment of the same a somewhat inconvenient matter. But such a report was probably the invention of pure malice. Be that as it may, the sugar refiner took his title and his money down to Stammars; and there he died, and there in due course he was buried. After him came his son, and then, in the ordinary course of events, his grandson, the present Sir Thomas Dudgeon and the third baronet of that name.

Sir Thomas, at this time, was close upon sixty years of age, and was a short-statured, podgy man, with white hair, and a red, good-natured face. He almost invariably wore a black tail-coat, black waistcoat, pepper-and-salt trousers, and shoes. He wore starched check neckcloths, and pointed collars that nearly touched his ears. His hats were always

of fluffy, white beaver, and as they were very rarely brushed, they gave him a certain shaggy and unkempt appearance. He had a trick of whistling under his breath when he had nothing better to do, and of jingling the keys and loose change in his pocket. It was a peculiarity of Sir Thomas that his shoes always creaked when he walked. No one could tell why every pair of shoes that he had should do so, but they did. At Stammars, everybody was so accustomed to this creaking that if by any possibility he had become possessed of a noiseless pair, his family would certainly have been alarmed: they would have taken it as an omen that something dreadful was about to happen. It was told in Pembridge as a good thing that when Sir Thomas was presented to his Sovereign, his shoes creaked so loudly that the eyes of all the great functionaries were turned on him in horror; but the little man backed smilingly out of the royal presence, blandly unconscious of the consternation he had excited. When we first make his acquaintance he had just been elected member for Pembridge, in place of the late Mr. Rackstraw, who had represented that borough for more than twenty years. Parliament would meet in February, when the family would go up to town, and Sir Thomas would take his oaths and his seat, and do his best to justify the hopes of his Pembridgian supporters, that he would speedily become one of the shining lights of his country's senate

Lady Dudgeon was a tall, large-boned woman, some half-dozen years younger than her husband. She had a loud, rough-edged voice, and a magisterial cross-examining manner. She was never happier than when laying down the law to some of her servants or dependents, or scolding them for an infringement of one or another of the innumerable rules and regulations with which she strove to fence round the daily lives of all those over whom she had any control. Had she been a man, Lady Dudgeon would infallibly have developed into a Justice of the Peace, and as such have been a terror to all the evil-doers of the neighbourhood. With two exceptions, everybody at Stammars, her husband included, stood in awe of her. Those exceptions were her eldest daughter, Sophia, aged thirteen; and Eleanor Lloyd.

Lady Dudgeon had only two children living—the aforesaid Sophia, and Caroline, who was two years younger than her sister. For their behoof it was that an engagement had been entered into with Olive Deane. They were two handsome, resolute girls, full of high spirits and mischief, who looked upon governesses as their natural enemies. Three ladies of this profession they had already worried into resigning their position at Stammars, and they had looked forward with considerable glee to worrying Miss Deane in like manner.

It was on a complaint from Madame Ribaud, who was governess number two, respecting some terrible act of mutiny, that Sophia obtained a signal victory over her mother, and from that time she had

never let go the advantage thus gained. In consequence of Madame's complaint, Lady Dudgeon had taken Sophia by the hand, and had led her away with the avowed intention of shutting her up in a certain dark closet under the stairs, and there leaving her to do penance during the whole of a long summer's day—a day when the sun was shining and all the birds in the shrubbery were whistling to her to go out of doors and be one with them. "Mamma, you are not going to shut me up in that horrid hole?" said Sophia, when the door had been flung open for her to enter. "I certainly am going to shut you up here," said Lady Dudgeon, with a portentous shake of her head. "Then do you know what I shall do, mamma?" "I don't know what you will do, Sophia, neither do I care." "You are going to have a dinner-party on Friday," said Sophia, with determination. "In the middle of the dinner I shall walk into the room and tell everybody that you wear a wig and have five false teeth!" Lady Dudgeon glared down into the girl's bold face as if she could hardly believe the evidence of her ears. What Sophia had just stated she had hitherto fondly believed to be a secret known to her husband and her maid alone. "You naughty, vile girl," she stammered out. "I will send you right away from home to a school on the Continent, and you shall not come back any more until you are quite grown up." "All right, mamma; I'll go," said the undaunted girl; "but I'll write to everybody by post and tell them about the wig and the teeth;" and, as Lady Dudgeon knew, her daughter was just the girl to carry out such a threat. Her ladyship was puzzled. "Look here, mamma," said Sophy: "between you and me, Ribaud's nothing but an old stupid, and no more fit to be a governess than I am. You take my advice and send her about her business. I'm going to get my rope and have a jolly skip round the laurels." And almost before her ladyship knew what had happened, she had been well hugged, and found herself alone, staring blankly into the closet under the stairs.

A few days later Madame Ribaud received a month's notice, and Lady Dudgeon never attempted extreme measures with Sophia after that time.

It is not improbable that she had this very incident in her mind during her first interview with Miss Deane after the latter's arrival at Stammars. "I place them entirely in your hands," said her ladyship, in reference to her two girls. "Exercise whatever discipline over them you may think best, only don't box their ears, and don't trouble me. If you find that they are becoming your master instead of you theirs, don't come and complain in the expectation that I shall assist you to maintain an authority that you are not strong enough to keep in your own hands. Should such a contingency arise, it would be better for you to resign your situation at once."

For the first two or three days all went tolerably well, but hardly to

Olive's satisfaction. There were no overt signs of rebellion, but the girls seemed unaccountably stupid. Whether their stupidity arose from inattention, from weakness of memory, or from a natural lack of intelligence, she was for some time at a loss to judge. But, by-and-by, she began to suspect that this stupidity was merely an assumption on their part purposely to annoy her, and that all the time they were laughing at her in their sleeves. But at such a game as that, Olive knew that her patience was far more than a match for theirs, and so it turned out. Miss Deane seemed so quiet and easy, that there was evidently no fun to be got out of her without trying something more practical than stumbling over one's French verbs, or making mistakes in the spelling of one's copies. Thus it fell out on a certain morning when Miss Deane was going out for a walk, that she found it impossible to get her arms into the sleeves of her waterproof. On examination, it was found that the sleeves had been sewn up at the wrist. Miss Deane hung the waterproof up without a word, and took off her bonnet. Then she said, "I think, young ladies, we will not go for our usual walk this morning." Sophy and Carry, half frightened and half defiant, were nudging each other and making believe that it was great fun.

When they got back into the schoolroom, said Miss Deane: "As you young ladies appear to be so fond of playing off practical jokes on other people, you cannot reasonably object to one being played off on you. You will, if you please, write out in detail and learn by heart, pages twenty-five to twenty-nine of the irregular verbs in your French Instruction Book. And you will not leave the room till you can repeat the lesson to my satisfaction."

The two girls made a face at each other, but said nothing. It was not the first time they had had a big task set them for a punishment, but they had always contrived to win the day either by force or stratagem, and they did not doubt their ability to do so in the present case.

By luncheon time they had got the lesson written out. It was not pleasant to have to sacrifice their luncheon, but they were prepared to submit to that: dinner would make up for everything. They did not expect that Miss Deane would let them go down to dinner as usual, but they did expect that she would go down herself, as Madame Ribaud had done in similar cases. When this had happened, one of the housemaids had always supplied them surreptitiously with a basket of provisions, which they had drawn up to their window by means of a cord, and had afterwards feasted on in secret. No dinners had ever tasted half so sweet. Thus provisioned, they had been able to set Madame Ribaud at defiance, who, indeed, had never the heart to extend their quarantine beyond the usual hour for tea, and would then set her rebels free, with a little sigh and an ominous shake of her head.

As it had happened before, so would it fall out again, thought the girls: but they did not know Olive Deane.

Between luncheon and dinner-time they dawdled over their lesson, skimming it carelessly over a few times, but employing themselves more in drawing caricatures than in anything else. After a time the dinner-bell rang; they dined early at Stammars when there was no company; but apparently Miss Deane took no notice. "Did you not hear the dinner-bell, Miss Deane?" asked Caroline, timidly. "Yes, I heard it, but I don't want any dinner to-day. I am going to stay here with you."

The girls looked at each other. Carry's eyes flushed with tears, but Sophy clenched her sharp white teeth and said something under her breath. All the same she was as hungry as a young wolf. Both the girls, in fact, were blessed with fine, healthy appetites, which they took care to indulge on every possible occasion; and now their appetites cried out in a way that it was almost impossible to resist.

Candles were lighted and the afternoon wore itself wearily on till tea-time came round. Anxious eyes were turned on Miss Deane. Surely she would go down to tea; if not, what could she be made of? But no, Miss Deane merely changed one book for another, and went on with her reading, totally unconcerned. Carry snivelled a little in secret, but Sophy looked as fierce as a young brigand. Presently Sophy wrote a little note and flung it across to her sister. "If she doesn't let us out soon, I'll kill her and roast her for supper." This made poor Carry tremble violently. She fully believed in her sister's ability to carry out her terrible threat. And so another wretched hour doled itself wearily out. Sophy's wolf was becoming very ravenous indeed. She saw clearly that her enemy was too strong for her. She tossed a scrap of paper to her sister, on which she had written the words: "It's no use. She carries too many guns for us"—this was a favourite phrase of her father. "I'm going to learn my task, and I advise you to do the same."

Three-quarters of an hour later, Sophy walked up to Miss Deane and held out her book in silence. Then she went through her task without a single mistake. She took back the book, made Miss Deane an elaborate curtsey, and marched out of the room with the dignified air of a young duchess. Carry did not manage so well. She broke down when about half-way through and burst into tears. Olive quietly shut the book, drew the girl to her and kissed her, and then bade her run off and get some supper.

From that day forth, Miss Deane and her pupils were on the best possible terms.

CHAPTER VIII.

GERALD AT STAMMARS.

A PLEASANT morning-room at Stammars. Lady Dudgeon is busy with her correspondence. To her enter Sir Thomas and Mr. Pomeroy. The former has a volume of Hansard under his arm, the latter carries a roll of manuscript. Lady Dudgeon lays down her pen and looks up.

"There is no fear, I hope, Mr. Pomeroy," she says, "that Sir Thomas's letter of thanks to his supporters will be too late for the next issue of the 'Pembridge Gazette'?"

"The editor has promised me that it shall appear on Saturday without fail."

"Have you got the speech ready that Sir Thomas is to deliver at the Farmers' Dinner on Tuesday next?"

"Sir Thomas had it from me yesterday."

"Have you looked over it, my dear?"—to the baronet.

"I fell asleep over it last night while you were at the ball."

"And you doubtless found that Mr. Pomeroy had succeeded in faithfully reproducing your views and ideas with regard to the various important topics on which you are desirous of addressing our friends on Tuesday next?"

"Mr. Pomeroy has written the speech. If he would only speak it too, I——"

"That is nonsense, dear. No one but yourself must be the exponent of your own ideas. Mr. Pomeroy's share in the transaction is a purely mechanical one: that of finding words wherewith to clothe the thoughts of a profoundly original mind. Am I not right, Mr. Pomeroy?"

"Your ladyship could not be otherwise."

"So be it," said Sir Thomas. "Anything for a quiet life. But I'll be hanged if I ever knew before that I had such a lot of ideas."

"That is just what I have said all along, my dear. If you had never succeeded in getting into Parliament, what would have become of the splendid abilities, of the choice gifts of intellect, with which Nature has so liberally endowed you? They would simply have been wasted, and your country would have been so much the poorer by the loss of them."

"That is all very fine, your ladyship; but as for my splendid abilities—fudge! My abilities lie among my turnips and shorthorns, and not in speechifying to a lot of fellows who laugh at me the moment my back is turned."

"The modesty of real talent, Mr. Pomeroy."

"Just so, madam."

"I have not lived with you all these years, Sir Thomas, without being aware that you were born to be a landmark in your country's history."

"Heaven forbid! Why not make a milestone of me at once?"

Sir Thomas sighed deeply, jingled the change in his pocket, and looked out of the window. Presently he began to whistle under his breath. Her ladyship folded and addressed her note with slow, mechanical precision. Turning to her husband, she said: "You will have to be very industrious in order to get your speech off by heart in readiness for Tuesday's dinner."

"I shall indeed—more's the pity! I never could get my lessons off by heart when I was a school-boy, and it is not likely that I can take kindly to the task at my time of life."

"Now that your election is safe there will be no necessity for you to speak except on very rare occasions. There are too many empty-headed speakers, too many frothy orators, in Parliament already. All the more will your grand faculty of silence be invaluable to your country. We want men of profound thought, with the ability to express themselves in the fewest possible words. When once it is understood by the House that you are not a speaker but a thinker, you cannot fail to be appreciated. Am I not right, Mr. Pomeroy?"

"Undoubtedly you are right, madam. The House will soon learn to appraise Sir Thomas at his proper value."

"You will be a man, dear, much sought for on Committees. Your opinion will carry immense weight with it because it will be so seldom expressed. There is a massive solidity of brain about you such as few of your contemporaries can hope to rival."

"That's all very well, but don't forget to let me have a supply of lozenges on Tuesday. If I haven't a lozenge in my mouth while I'm speaking, I shall be sure to break down."

"The lozenges shall not be forgotten," said her ladyship. "I will make a note of it."

"And I shall want a spare handkerchief in my pocket. Something to fumble with, you know. I can't bear to be empty handed when I'm speaking. So awkward, you know."

"Everything shall be attended to." Then turning to Mr. Pomeroy, she added: "How delightful it is to note the little peculiarities of genius! Lozenges and a spare handkerchief for one: for another an orange or a toothpick! When Sir Thomas's biography comes to be written, these little traits of character must not be forgotten."

"They are very characteristic," said Jack, with the utmost seriousness.

Gerald (or, as we had better perhaps call him during his sojourn at Stammars, Jack Pomeroy) could never feel quite sure whether Lady Dudgeon in her own mind really believed her husband to be possessed of those superior qualities the presence of which she was continually

striving to impress as an undoubted fact on the minds of all around her, or whether it was merely an effort on her part to blind people to the deficiencies of her very commonplace idol. How was it possible, Jack often asked himself, that such a woman as Lady Dudgeon could be self deceived in so simple a matter? On every other subject her ladyship was shrewd and clear-headed to a degree. She could scold her servants, or check her tradesmen's accounts; she could discuss the last fashion in bonnets, or the last bit of gossip anent a neighbour's shortcomings, as effectively and with as much relish as any middle-aged lady in the three kingdoms. And yet with regard to Sir Thomas she seemed so thoroughly in earnest, her admiration of him (while keeping the matrimonial yoke fixed tightly on his shoulders) seemed so genuine, that it was next to impossible to believe that she was merely acting a part in furtherance of certain hidden views of her own. It was a problem that Jack set himself to study from the day of his arrival at Stammars; but at the end of a month he found himself no nearer its solution than he had been at first.

Sir Thomas himself was by no means elated by the honour which the electors of Pembridge had thrust upon him. He felt it especially hard that he should have to leave the country which he loved so much, in order that he might mew himself up in London during the six pleasantest months of the year. "What do I want with being M.P.?" he would often ask himself, with a sort of mild despair. "When a man has got his cows, and his sheep, and his grass crops, and his wheat to look after, as I have, what more can he want to make him happy? What a fool I must have been to let Matilda persuade me as she did! And then that speechifying! Ugh! Matilda may say what she likes, but I've not got what Cozzard calls 'the gift of the gab;' and if I had, there's far more talking done in the world now than there's any need for. If people would only work more and talk less, we should be all the better for it."

The "Cozzard" alluded to above was Sir Thomas's factotum and chief business man in all inferior matters. Mr. Kelvin looked after his interests in matters superior. Cozzard was something more than a gamekeeper without coming up to the modern notion of a bailiff. Being Sir Thomas's foster-brother, he could do and say things that nobody else would venture on, and was more in his master's confidence, and knew more of his master's secrets, than Lady Dudgeon herself.

In search of this faithful retainer, Sir Thomas bent his steps this morning towards the stables, after leaving his wife and Mr. Pomeroy. He found Cozzard in the harness-room, smoking a short black pipe and mending a fishing-rod: a spare, grizzled, hard-featured man, in a velveteen coat and gaiters, with an unmistakable something about him that spoke of horses, and dogs, and guns, and a free life in the woods and fields.

"Morning, Cozzard," said Sir Thomas. "I've just looked in to tell you that we're off to London next week."

"I'm mortal sorry to hear it, Sir Thomas."

"So am I sorry, Cozzard—very sorry."

"It's all through that confounded 'lection. I wish with all my heart that you'd lost it!"

"So do I wish with all my heart that I'd lost it—only I wouldn't for the world have her ladyship hear me say so."

"Lord! how we shall all miss you down here at the old place! But, there! it seems months since we saw you about the fields, or riding Gray Dapple from one farm to another, and all through that confounded 'lection. And now Gray Dapple's that fat for want of exercise she can hardly get out o' the stable door, and everything looks different since you took to those 'lectioneering ways."

"I am missed, then, a little bit, am I, Cozzard?"

"I should think you just was, Sir Thomas. Why, the very dogs—Spot, and Ranger, and Lob—seem to miss you. I know they do."

Sir Thomas coughed and turned the subject. "What I want you to do," said he, "is to write me a long letter once a week while I'm away in London, telling me how everything is going on. Not but what I shall drop down and see you sometimes on a Saturday. You will tell me how the stock is getting on, and how the crops look, and give a look at the kitchen garden, and see that a couple of hampers of fresh vegetables are sent up every week, and——"

"But, Sir Thomas ——!" pleaded Cozzard, with a visible lengthening of his thin visage. "I couldn't put down half that, not if I was to write all day on Sunday. Six lines is the most as ever I could manage, and then there mustn't be any long words in it."

"Then I'll tell you what you shall do: you shall get my god-daughter, Sally, to do the writing part. You tell her what to say, and she'll put it down all right and ship-shape, and I'll bring her a new silk gown when I come back from London. And now get Gray Dapple saddled, and find my favourite spud. You and I, Cozzard, will go round the farms this very morning."

It had been altogether a surprise to Pomeroy to find Miss Deane in the position of governess at Stammars. Was the coincidence of her being there at the same time as himself due altogether to accident, or was there some hidden purpose underlying it?—Was it, or was it not, connected in any way with the concealment by Kelvin of the contents of the sealed packet? And yet, how was it possible that Olive Deane could have any knowledge of the sealed packet? Matthew Kelvin was not a man who would be likely to take anyone into his confidence in such a matter. No; Miss Deane's presence at Stammars must evidently be set down as one of those fortuitous events which

happen so often in real life: events which would seem as if they must have their origin in some set purpose or prearranged design, but which are in reality due to the merest accident.

"You did not expect to see me here, Mr. Pomeroy," said Olive with a smile, as she shook Jack's hand about an hour after his arrival at Stammars.

"No, indeed," said Jack. "It is quite an unexpected pleasure."

"When I saw you last, I had no idea whatever of coming here. Lady Dudgeon, knowing I was out of a situation, called on me some three days after your departure from Pembridge, and offered me the charge of her two daughters—a charge which I was glad to accept. When one has to work for one's daily bread, it does not do to be idle for too long a time."

"I have been used to idleness—to comparative idleness, that is—for so long a time that I am afraid it will go rather against the grain to settle down to any daily occupation."

"And yet it is their very rarity which makes the idle hours of a busy man so peculiarly sweet." Then she turned the subject. "Miss Lloyd is away visiting in Leicestershire, and will not be back for about a week." This she said with her searching eyes bent full upon him.

"So I have been told already," said Jack, drily: but he could not prevent a little tell-tale colour from mounting to his cheek.

Nothing more was said at that time, nor was Miss Lloyd's name mentioned again between them till after that young lady's return.

Jack was very eager that she should return. He chafed and fumed at her absence, but why he should do so he could not have told anyone, unless it were that he thought he could have spent his time much more pleasantly and profitably to himself than in cataloguing the books, and writing the letters, of an unfledged country M.P. But having advanced so far in his enterprise, he was by no means minded to give it up. He would await the return of Eleanor Lloyd even though she were two months away instead of a single week. He had not yet decided as to what his line of action should be when he should meet her. All that he left to time and circumstances: at present he asked only that he might see this girl about whom so much had been told him, and towards whom he stood in a relationship so peculiar and uncommon.

He was destined to see her sooner than he was aware of.

Always a great walker, Jack found his greatest pleasure, since he had come down to Stammars, in long, solitary rambles along the pleasant Hertfordshire roads, and the more lonely the road, the better he was pleased. As he was posting along at the rate of four miles an hour one afternoon towards the end of January, swinging his walking-stick, and watching the flying clouds, his ear was suddenly caught

by a low, plaintive cry that evidently came from somewhere close at hand. He stood still to listen. Presently he heard it again, evidently the wailing cry of a very young child. He looked round him on every side, but there was not a human being nor even a house visible from where he was standing. Once again the cry came, this time louder than before. His eyes, drawn by the sound, concentrated themselves on the root of a large tree, of a tree which grew out of the hedge and overshadowed the road. Between the footpath and the hedge was a tiny watercourse, now covered with a thin coat of ice. Over this Jack strode and began to peer about in the hedge bottom. He was not long in discovering the origin of the cry that he had heard. In a sort of tiny recess formed in part by the gnarled roots of the tree, and in part by the close-woven shoots of the hedge lay a child—a child of apparently some six months old, with a tiny, pinched face, and dark, serious eyes that gazed up wonderingly at Pomeroy for a moment and then filled with tears.

"A pleasant predicament truly!" muttered Jack to himself. "There must surely be somebody belonging to it close by."

He swung himself up on to the root of the tree, and took a long, steady look round. The point where he now was was exactly on the crown of a small hill. Right and left of him the road dipped down into a valley with the bare, treeless fields on either side. Nowhere was there a human being visible: had there been one he could hardly have failed to see it. The child had evidently been deserted—left there to be found by chance, or otherwise to die.

When Jack had satisfied his mind on this point he dropped quickly from his perch, flung his stick over the hedge, picked up the child as tenderly as he knew how, stepped lightly across the brook, and set off on his way back to Stammars—a three miles' walk. He felt very awkward indeed, and was possessed by an acute sense of the ludicrous appearance he must have presented had anyone been there to see him, which fortunately there was not. The child seemed wrapped up warmly enough, its outside covering being an old black skirt of some cheap material. Whether it were a boy or a girl, Jack had no skill to judge, nor was that a point which had much interest for him. That strange, serious look in its eyes troubled him a little; but when, after it had finished its examination of him, a wintry smile flickered over its little white face, while it seemed to nestle nearer to him, he could not keep his arms from folding themselves still more closely round it.

The difficulty that now presented itself to Jack's mind was how to dispose of the child. It would never do to take the little waif to Stammars: Lady Dudgeon would have been horrified: and yet Jack shrank instinctively from the thought of leaving it to the tender mercies of the workhouse authorities, although that was clearly the proper thing to do. He was still debating the question, when he heard

the noise of wheels behind him. He turned instinctively, and to his great dismay saw a pony phaeton coming rapidly along the road, driven by a youth in livery, beside whom was seated a lady—whether young or old Jack could not yet tell—but evidently well wrapped up in furs. The hot colour rushed to his face. What should he do? What indeed could he do? There was no bye-lane up which he could slink—no stile through which he could wriggle, and so put the shelter of the thick hedge between himself and the road; and it was quite evident that he could not leave the child on the foot-path and take to his heels. All that he could do was to pull his hat savagely over his brows, set his teeth, and march stubbornly on, as if it were the most natural and proper thing in the world for a gentleman in a fashionable overcoat and kid gloves to be strolling along a country road in the middle of the afternoon, hugging a baby—and not a nicely dressed baby either—which the next person he should meet might accuse him of having stolen.

"I hope she's an old lady—a grandmother, or at least a mother," said Jack to himself in desperation. "In that case, it mightn't be a bad thing to appeal to her, and tell her how I came to pick up this pitiful little vagabond. It's quite evident that I can't walk into Pembridge like this."

But, as it happened, the lady who caused poor Jack to quake so terribly was neither a grandmother nor a mother. She was, in fact, no other than Eleanor Lloyd, who was on her way back to Stammars a couple of days before she was expected there. One of the children having been taken suddenly ill at the house where she had been staying, she had hurried her departure. She had quitted the train a couple of stations short of Pembridge in order to call upon another friend, and it was in this other friend's phaeton that Miss Lloyd was now being conveyed to Stammars.

As the phaeton drove past, Pomeroy, struggling gallantly on, with a very red face, could not resist shooting a little glance out of the corners of his eyes at the occupant of the carriage. She was young and had blonde hair—so much he could see; and then he set his eyes stubbornly before him and would not look again. He could see, too, that she gave him one quick, comprehensive glance in passing. He thought the worst was over, and began to breathe again. But hardly had the phaeton passed him a score yards when a small hamper that had been tied up under the back seat, slipped, and fell to the ground. Unconscious of her loss, the lady drove serenely on. What was to be done? Unless Jack should call out, the hamper would be left behind in the road; and if he did call out they would drive back, and then all concealment on his part would be impossible. "I'm in for it now and no mistake!" he muttered to himself, and then he called at the top of his voice.

By the time the phaeton had been driven back and the hamper picked

up, Jack, who had been walking steadily forward all the time, was within half a dozen yards of the lady. She turned to thank him, but he could see that all the time she was speaking her eyes were fixed in a sort of mild surprise on the burden in his arms.

"If you are going my way, perhaps you will allow me to help you along the road," she said.

"You are very kind, and I will gladly avail myself of your offer," he replied. "But first a word of explanation. I found this little waif in the hedge bottom about half a mile from here, evidently deserted. Of course I could not leave it there; but now that I have brought it away, I am really at a loss to know what to do with it."

"Deserted, did you say!" exclaimed Miss Lloyd, and she was out of the phaeton in a moment. "Poor, poor little darling!" and before Jack knew what had happened he found himself relieved of his burden. Miss Lloyd's next act was to stoop and kiss the child. When she looked up, her lovely blue eyes were brimmed with tears, but a half-smile still dimpled the corners of her mouth. Pomeroy vowed to himself that never in the whole course of his life had he seen anything half so charming.

Then they got into the phaeton, Jack sitting behind, and Miss Lloyd still holding the baby. "What a cruel thing to do!" she said. "Who would believe that there could be such hard hearts in this beautiful world!"

Jack did not answer, but his heart gave a little sigh. "What a darling she is!" he thought. "I wonder whether Eleanor Lloyd is half as pretty. And yet, why wonder, for what is Eleanor Lloyd to me, or I to Eleanor Lloyd?"

He could not keep his eyes off her, and Miss Lloyd could not keep hers off the baby. "If it were a duchess's child she couldn't take to it more kindly," said Jack to himself. "What strange creatures women are!"

Presently Miss Lloyd turned with a bright look in her eye. "How good it was of you to pick up the child and bring it away with you!"

"Under the circumstances, I don't see what else I could have done," said Pomeroy, simply.

"Many people would have left the child where they found it, and have satisfied themselves with telling the inmates of the nearest house of their discovery."

"That is a plan I never thought of," said Jack, with a smile, "or else I should very likely have adopted it."

"No, I don't think you would," said Miss Lloyd, earnestly.

"In any case, now that I have saddled myself with the young shaver, I'm quite at a loss to know what to do with him."

"Do with *him*, indeed!" exclaimed Miss Lloyd. "Don't you know, sir, that it's a little girl?"

"I certainly didn't know anything of the kind," said the crest-fallen Jack. "But at that age they are all so much alike."

"Ah, you gentlemen are very ignorant of many things." Then she added, "I suppose it would never do to take the child to Stammars."

"To Stammars!" exclaimed Jack in astonishment. "That is the place where I am living at present."

"Indeed! A guest of Sir Thomas Dudgeon, I presume?"

"Hardly that. My name is John Pomeroy, and I am only Sir Thomas's new secretary."

"And I am Miss Lloyd. Like you, my present home is at Stammars."

Pomeroy did not answer. He was confounded. But through him there shot a strange, rapturous thrill such as he had never felt before. "I wish we were going to travel together for a thousand miles instead of three!" was the unspoken thought in his heart. "This is she whom I have secretly longed to see ever since I was quite a boy. Her name itself had always a strange fascination for me. And now I see her and know her. If there be any wit in my brain, any power of pleading in my tongue, any strength of purpose in my heart—then shall this sweet creature become my wife!"

"I think," said Miss Lloyd, "that for the present, at least, we could not do better than place this little darling under the care of Mrs. Nixon, the wife of the under gardener at Stammars. She is a mother herself, and will treat it kindly. We shall then have time to think about its future. It is very singular that you and I should have met thus. When I passed you on the road I was certainly puzzled at first to make out what it was that you were carrying," she added, with a smile. "But when I saw what it really was, I thought that you were perhaps doing it for a wager. Such things have been done, I daresay. But to do what you did out of pure compassion, was very nice of you indeed."

CHAPTER IX.

FOUND.

ON the eve of his departure for Pembridge, Gerald Warburton had promised Ambrose Murray that immediately after his return he would consult with him as to the steps which it would be advisable to take in furtherance of that quest on which the mind of the elder man was so firmly bent, but which to the younger one looked, at that time, so thoroughly hopeless. The momentary glimpse which they obtained of Jacoby while standing on the platform at Welwyn Station, happening just then, came like an apt and singular confirmation of the story told by Murray. It acted like a spur to Gerald's flagging purpose, and

would have served as an additional incentive to Murray, had any such been needed, to press forward unflinchingly towards the end he had in view. From that day forward no one could accuse Gerald of any want of enthusiasm for the cause he had adopted as his own. He put his hand to the plough and he never looked backward again.

The first, and perhaps the most difficult move in the game they had set themselves to play, had been solved for them by the merest accident. Jacoby was still alive. There was no need for them to trouble themselves further on that score. The next move, and one hardly less difficult than the first one, was to find out where Jacoby was now living; and the question that Gerald at once set himself to answer was this: What is the likeliest and readiest mode of discovering the whereabouts of this man?

Among the papers which had come into the hands of Miss Bellamy at the death of Ambrose Murray's wife, were certain verbatim accounts of the trial for the Tewkesbury murder. These papers Miss Bellamy had carefully preserved, and they were now handed over by her to Gerald, who proceeded to read them carefully through three or four times, by which means he made himself master of all the details of the case as they had presented themselves at the trial. A certain Mr. Frodsham had been Murray's counsel on that occasion, and very admirable had been the speech, and very cogent the arguments, employed by him in his attempt to prove the innocence of his client—an attempt which, as we have already seen, did not succeed. To Gerald, turning the whole case over in his mind, it seemed that the first thing to do was to find out this Mr. Frodsham, see him, consult with him, tell him in confidence of Murray's escape, and ascertain whether, after so long a time, his experience could suggest any feasible plan for proving, or even attempting to prove, the innocence of a client for whose sake, twenty years ago, all his eloquence had been exerted in vain.

In setting about the task which he had thus taken in hand, and which he was thoroughly determined to go through with, Gerald did not expect to derive much assistance from Murray himself, nor, in fact, did he. Murray was altogether too unpractical; he had been shut up too long from the busy, struggling world around him to enable him to cope with it face to face, or to grope his way through such a blind man's maze as his own case necessarily involved, at every step of which a knot would have to be disentangled, or a difficulty of some kind encountered and overcome. He could asseverate earnestly enough that Jacoby was the murderer, and that the sole object for which he now lived was to bring the crime home to him; but when asked by what means that was to be done, he was like a child who had lost itself in some dark place. He could only cling to Gerald, and ask him to think, to devise, to scheme for him. "I have faith—

faith the most intense," he would sometimes say, "that the world will know me for what I am before I die. Why else was my reason given back to me? why else was a way of escape shown me? why else am I here except to prove this thing? And, oh, Gerald! why has an overruling Intelligence sent to me you, the son of my lost darling's oldest friend—you, with your kind heart, and clear brain, and knowledge of the world and its ways—except to assist me, to give to my forlorn weakness that strong helping hand, without which I can do nothing! Other men might ask: Why should I help this escaped lunatic? Why should I trouble myself about this criminal madman, on whose head the guilt of blood still rests? But not you—not you! You and I, Gerald, have been mysteriously drawn together by the bonds of an invisible sympathy. We have been brought together not that we may be to each other as mere touch-and-go acquaintances, but for the working out of some hidden purpose. For good or for evil, the issues of your life and mine are inextricably mingled; like streams from two distant sources, they have met, never again to be disunited, till they fall into the far-off Hidden Sea!"

Mr. Frodsham had been too well known in the legal profession for Gerald to experience much difficulty in obtaining answers to his inquiries respecting that gentleman. It did not take him long to ascertain that Mr. Frodsham had been dead for several years. But from the same source whence he derived this positive information, came another piece of information not quite so positive, which being of no apparent use, was thrown in gratis, as it were, to the effect that although Mr. Frodsham was dead, Mr. Peter Byrne, who had been his confidential clerk for many years, was supposed to be still alive. To Gerald this extra piece of information seemed of no use whatever. His idea in wanting to see Mr. Frodsham had been, not to obtain facts—those he had already—but to seek his advice, his counsel, perchance his assistance. But of what use or assistance Mr. Frodsham's confidential clerk could be to him, he could not for the life of him see. Still, as it behoved him to neglect no source of information however trivial or apparently unimportant it might seem to be, and as he was rather nonplussed for the time being as to what was the next step which it behoved him to take, he decided to have this Mr. Byrne hunted up, if it were possible to find him, and then see him in person, on the very faint chance that something might be elicited from him which would tend to show what line of action it would be advisable to adopt next.

Five days later Gerald received Mr. Byrne's address by post. It was No. 2, Amelia Terrace, Claridge Road, Battersea, which place Gerald next day made it his business to go in search of.

Amelia Terrace was in a desolate locality enough, being shut out from the world by wide intervening stretches of market garden, very

useful and very productive, no doubt, but which seemed to lack every pleasant attribute with which a garden is usually associated in one's mind. The particular house that Gerald was in search of was one of twenty others exactly similar to it in pattern and design. Little shabby-looking six-roomed houses, the cheap stucco with which their fronts were plastered peeling off already in great ugly blotches, the yard of "garden" on to which their windows looked, protected by cheap railings, broken away in many places, and thick with rust, or twisted out of shape in others. Inside, the rooms were close and frowsy, with doors and windows that in some cases would not shut, and in others left crevices that in this wintry weather had to be stuffed up with rags, or old newspapers, or even here and there with an old bonnet. At one corner was a flaring gin-palace, and at the other a huckster's shop, only its proprietor did not call it a shop, but an "emporium."

Yes, Mr. Byrne was at home, said the slatternly servant who answered Gerald's knock at No. 2.

Before more could be said, some one called out from the parlour, "Walk in, sir, walk in, if it's me you are in want of. I saw you when you were over the way, but I didn't know that you were looking for No. 2."

Gerald accepted the invitation and walked into the parlour, a shabbily-furnished little room, pervaded by a vile odour of stale tobacco-smoke which was anything but pleasant. Mr. Byrne, in red morocco slippers, a Turkish cap, and a faded dressing-gown of a flowery Chinese sort of pattern, rose from the sofa to receive him.

Peter Byrne was a man of sixty, but looked quite ten years younger than that age, thanks to his dyed hair, his artificial teeth, and the faintest possible suspicion of rouge, without which, when got up for the day, he never ventured abroad. But so deftly and artfully was the hare's-foot applied that not one out of a dozen of his acquaintances accepted as other than genuine that pleasant healthy colour which, whatever the season might be, Peter Byrne's cheeks never failed to display. He was rather under than over the medium height, was lightly built, and was very active for his age. His head was large and somewhat disproportionate to the size of his body. He had large but regular features, and had doubtless thought himself very good-looking when a young man; but the lines of his face were now coarse and fleshy, and seemed to indicate a too free indulgence in the good things of the table, and possibly too great a fondness for after-dinner potations. He had clear grey eyes, with a keenness and a steadfastness in them that Gerald liked; and yet there seemed something factitious about his smile: it came and went too readily to seem altogether genuine.

Gerald having introduced himself and taken a chair, proceeded at once to the object of his visit. "In my search for certain information,"

he said, "I have been recommended to call upon you as having been the confidential clerk of the late Mr. Frodsham."

"I certainly was Mr. Frodsham's confidential clerk for several years," said Byrne, "and any information that may be in my power I shall be happy to afford you—provided, of course, that such information involve no breach of business confidence."

"You need be under no apprehension on that score," answered Gerald. "I must ask you, in the first place, to let your memory travel back for twenty years, and then to tell me whether you have any recollection of a somewhat remarkable case in which Mr. Frodsham was engaged for the defence. It was a murder case, and was tried at the Gloucester Spring Assizes. The crime was committed at Tewkesbury, the murdered man's name was Paul Stilling, and the prisoner's name Ambrose Murray."

"I remember the case in question quite well," answered Byrne. "In fact, I was in court when the trial took place. Mr. Frodsham was busier than usual that circuit, and he took me with him."

"So far that is fortunate," said Gerald. "Then you will probably recollect that one of the chief witnesses at the trial was a Dutch or German Jew of the name of Max Jacoby?"

"I recollect distinctly the man to whom you refer."

"My object in coming to see you to-day is to ask you whether you can in any way assist me to discover the present whereabouts of this man, Max Jacoby?"

Byrne gave vent to a long, low whistle. "It's a hard nut, sir, that you've set yourself to crack—the finding of a man like that after twenty years; and—and really I hardly know in what way I can help you."

Gerald was silent. He had no intention of accepting Byrne's answer as final.

"Why don't you apply to Scotland Yard for assistance?" asked Byrne, after a pause.

"I have my private reasons for not doing so," answered Gerald. "But there is no reason why you should not treat me as your client in this matter, and obtain this information for me either from Scotland Yard or elsewhere."

"Hum. Such inquiries, whether successful or unsuccessful, cost money."

"Get me the information I ask for, or even show me that you have done your best to get it but have failed, and we shall not quarrel about the price."

"But the man may have died years ago, or, being a foreigner, he may be living in some little town on the Continent, in which case our inquiries could hardly hope for success."

"Jacoby was alive, and well, and in London, only three weeks ago."

"Oh, come, there's something tangible about a fact like that. And you know nothing more concerning him?"

"Absolutely nothing."

Mr. Byrne with due solemnity and deliberation proceeded to charge and light a long-stemmed pipe with a painted China bowl which stood propped against the chimney-piece ready to his hand.

"I will be candid with you, Mr. Warburton," he said after a few preliminary puffs. "I don't anticipate that there will be so much difficulty in tracing this man Jacoby as there might be in the case of a great many other people."

"Why should there be any difference in his case?" asked Gerald.

"Because he is a man with whom the police have had dealings, directly or indirectly, not on one occasion only, but several times. There is no need for me to say more at present, except this, that such a man is seldom altogether lost sight of unless he leaves the country and goes to live abroad. Still, I should advise you not to be too sanguine."

Gerald promised not to be too sanguine, but still had good hopes of success. He then went into some monetary details with Mr. Byrne, and after that he rose to go.

"I daresay you wonder a little to find a man like me living in a dog-kennel of a place like this," said Byrne with his expansive smile, as he stood for a moment or two airing his back at the fire.

"I have seen too much of the world to wonder greatly at anything," said Gerald, ambiguously.

"You see, this is how it was," said Byrne, confidentially. "I was Frodsham's confidential clerk for a great number of years—not that I ever liked the profession, but my bread and cheese was dependent on it, and I was bound to stick to it. By the death of a relative I came in for ten thousand pounds, and I at once retired to live on my means. I had always been fond of the turf, I had always fancied that I knew something about that noble animal, the horse, and I now determined to turn my knowledge to account. I made up my mind that I would turn my ten thousand pounds into thirty thousand. Sir, I did *not* turn it into thirty thousand, but into five hundred. In fact, I lost the whole of it. I was too old to re-enter the profession, and having an income of eighty pounds a year for life, I determined to settle down upon it, and make the best of a bad job. This locality, if not the most genteel in the world, is cheap and salubrious, and here Miriam and I have pitched our tent for a little time, while waiting for summer weather. Relatives, sir, can't live for ever, especially when turned eighty years of age and asthmatical into the bargain."

"At the risk of being thought impertinent, may I ask who Miriam is?"

"Miriam, sir, is my daughter—an only child, and a jewel of a girl, though I say it who ought not. Nature, sir, has been liberal to her,

having endowed her with beauty and talents that would fit her to adorn a sphere far superior to this one. I hope and trust that there is a brilliant future in store for her."

This interview with Mr. Byrne took place between the time of Gerald's first visit to Pembridge and that second visit which resulted from his acceptance of the position of secretary to Sir Thomas Dudgeon. He gave Byrne Miss Bellamy's address, to which any communication for him was to be sent. Such communication would be re-addressed and sent forward to him to Stammars by Miss Bellamy. He had been at Sir Thomas Dudgeon's about a week, when he received the following brief note from Byrne:

"DEAR SIR,—With reference to the subject respecting which you spoke to me a few days ago—no time has been lost in taking the preliminary steps, and I am happy to inform you that I believe we are already on the right track. I hope in a week at the most to be able to supply you with some positive information. But we must not be too sanguine. Faithfully yours, P. B."

A few days later Gerald went up to town to transact certain business for Sir Thomas Dudgeon, and having some spare time on his hands, he spent most of it either with Miss Bellamy or Ambrose Murray. It was while they were all three sitting together one afternoon that the postman brought a second note from Byrne to Gerald.

"DEAR SIR,—The person respecting whom you spoke to me at my house is now, I believe, passing under another name. If you will meet me either this or to-morrow evening at seven on the steps of the General Post Office, I will take you to a place where—yourself unseen—you can see the man to whom I allude, and so have the means of identifying him. Should he prove to be the person you want, I will afterwards furnish you with his address. If you decide upon meeting me this evening, wire me to that effect. Yours faithfully, P. B."

At seven o'clock that evening Gerald Warburton and Ambrose Murray found themselves at St. Martin's-le-Grand, where two minutes later they were joined by Mr. Byrne.

"As I myself am totally unacquainted with the person we are in search of, never to my knowledge having seen him," said Gerald to Byrne, "I have been compelled to bring this gentleman with me. Jacoby was well known to him by sight many years ago, and he does not doubt his ability to identify him now."

Byrne bowed slightly and threw a keen glance at Murray; but the evening was cold and the latter was so muffled up that very little of his features could be seen.

They were still standing on the post-office steps, and before starting Byrne said to Gerald: "The man I am about to show you lives in the City, and has done so for several years. When in town he always dines at one particular tavern. He generally reaches this place about half-past six and leaves it about half-past seven. He dined at this place yesterday and the day before, and I have no doubt that he is there at the present moment. We must wait near at hand till he comes out, and then you will have an opportunity of getting a clear view of him by the light of the lamp over the door."

Here and there in some quiet City nook may still be found one of those homely, old-fashioned taverns, innocent of lacquer work and gilding—panelled, not with looking-glass, but with substantial mahogany, dark with age, such as were common in the days when Charles Lamb or Washington Irving were peripatetics about the streets of London, but which are becoming rarer with each recurring year. To several of these taverns is attached a dining-room where a fried sole or a cut off a wholesome joint may be obtained as late as six or seven o'clock, and where anyone who is known to the house may have a chop or a steak done to a turn up till midnight. There is no bustle and confusion here; you are not hurried over your meals; you need not quit your seat the moment you have swallowed your last mouthful, in order to make room for some one else. Day after day the same people come—punctual to the minute, as a rule. They are all on hob-nobbing terms with each other, and fresh faces are rarely seen.

It was over against such a tavern as this that our three conspirators now stationed themselves. The street was very narrow, and exactly opposite the tavern was a dark passage leading to sundry suites of offices now silent and deserted. Within the shelter of this passage they took their stand. Not long had they to wait. Presently the swing doors were pushed open from the inner side, and the man whom they had come to see issued forth into the street—a man of fifty, or perhaps fifty-five, broad-chested, strongly built, with short grizzly hair, and with a face that might have been carved out of lignumvitæ, so hard, resolute, and determined was it in every line. He stood for a moment in the full light of the lamp over the doorway, and then he walked slowly down the street.

Gerald felt Murray's grasp on his arm tighten suddenly as the man came out.

"Is that the man you wanted me to find? Is that Max Jacoby?" asked Byrne in a low voice.

"That is Max Jacoby," answered Murray in a whisper.

"We must give him time to get clear away," said Byrne, "and then I will show you the place where he lives."

Five minutes later they left their hiding-place. Byrne, taking his companions through several short cuts and narrow ways, brought them

presently to another part of the City, and came to a halt close against a tall, substantial-looking house. It stood in a narrow way intended for foot passengers only, that led from one great artery of City traffic to another. One side of this footway was bounded by the blank wall of a range of huge warehouses that had their frontage in another street. The opposite boundary of the footway consisted of a low stone wall, crowned with rusty railings, that shut in an ancient graveyard. The church that once on a time had appertained to the graveyard had been demolished years ago, but the dilapidated tombstones, with their "forlorn Hic jacets" all overgrown with rank and frowsy herbage, were still there, together with a miscellaneous assortment of old shoes and rubbish. As usual, it was Nobody's business to bring about a different state of things, and Nobody did his business thoroughly by leaving it altogether undone.

The house to which Byrne had brought his companions was built into the graveyard, and its front door was in a line with the raised wall already spoken of. It was an old-fashioned, substantially-built house, and had doubtless at one time been the residence of the rector or of some other functionary connected with the church that was no longer there. From the windows, both back and front, the view must have been dismal in the extreme. To-night the whole house looked as dark and deserted as the graveyard in which it stood. Not a single glimmer of light was visible in any of its windows. Byrne, after taking a cautious look round, drew his companions forward. There was a square brass plate let into the door, on which, by the light of a lamp near hand, they all three read these words:

MAX VAN DUREN.
General Agent, &c.

"He has changed his name!" said Murray, turning suddenly on Byrne.

"There's nothing in that," said Byrne with a shrug. "In London one comes across queerer changes every day."

(*To be continued.*)

LIFE'S TRAVELLERS.

OH, Life's swift travellers, how they hurry on,
Hurry madly on!
Some with joy and merriment, mingling songs and jests;
Some with aching hearts throbbing on in tired breasts;
ome with muttered curses, some with blank despair;
Some with resignation, murmuring a prayer—
Life's swift travellers, how they hurry on!

Toil they ever, taking rarely rest,
Taking rarely rest!
Through the fresh early morn, and the noon's sultry heat,
Through the dead waste of night, on vision's wingèd feet;
Through Youth's tropic summer and Age's polar snow,
O'er the hill-tops of Joy, down in the depths of Woe,
Toil they ever, taking rarely rest!

What do they seek, these people? What their end?
Whither lies the end?
How will it be when their journey's toil is done?
Will they rest evermore? Will peaceful rest be won?
In that reward, so blest, will they forget
The pain of the past race—its toil, its fret?
What do they seek, these people?—what

The end of all is at a dark, low Gate,
A dark, low, narrow Gate!
Through its mysterious portals, with faces strange and white,
The winners in the race vanish from mortal sight;
Pleadings go after them—no answer cometh back;
the jostling travellers o'er the beaten track,
to pierce the mystery of the Gate.

Beyond (says Faith) there lies the Heavenly Rest!
The blissful, Heavenly Rest!
There the weary souls of pilgrims are eased of their pain;
There sufferers by worldly loss count their eternal gain;
There they who with true courage the Race of Life have run,
Hear the Lord's angels chorusing, "Well done! Well done
Enter into the Heavenly Rest, oh, faithful one!"

RUPERT'S CHOICE.

"IT can't be done, mother!" exclaimed Rupert Loraine, startling both his mother and myself by impatiently flinging down on the breakfast-table the new Bradshaw which the butler had brought in to him a few moments before. "Those brutes of directors have been squabbling again, and have carefully re-arranged the trains on both lines so that none of them fit each other."

"Dinner can be as much later as you like," said Mrs. Loraine, looking up from her letters.

"Not a bit of good, mother, if you dined at midnight!" replied Rupert. "As it has stood all the summer, I could have done it beautifully. It was—Clevelands 5.50—Whitfield Junction 6.15—Newbury 6.55—and an hour to drive home and dress for dinner at eight; but now I can't get home to-night unless I leave Clevelands at three o'clock—which is impossible—and wait two hours at Whitfield."

"There must be a later train!" I said.

"Yes!" answered Rupert. "There is one at 6.10 from Clevelands, reaching Whitfield at 6.45: precisely a quarter of an hour after the last train leaves Whitfield for Newbury!"

Mrs. Loraine listened in evident consternation. "But, Rupert, what can you do? Miss Herries comes this afternoon."

"I know she does, mother, or it wouldn't matter a bit—but you must tell her I could not help it, and I will be here by breakfast-time to-morrow."

"How dreadfully provoking!" said Mrs. Loraine. "There will be the whole evening without you!"

Rupert laughed. "Well, mother, I'm not so conceited as to think that she can't get through an evening without me! Anyhow it can't be helped, and when I come back to-morrow morning I shall expect to find that you have been getting on like a house on fire!"

"I will do my best, but it will be so different for her without you," said Mrs. Loraine.

"I'm half inclined to think it a piece of luck," exclaimed Rupert, who was always rather an optimist. "You will be thrown more on each other at first and forced to break the ice and make a sudden plunge. Indeed, mother, Mona will suit you exactly, I am sure! She is good to read German poetry by the yard, and to play Beethoven by the hour, if you wish it; and she is great at schools and hymns and dirty children, and knows all about ferns—you like all the same things, I assure you!"

"*You* included, I suppose!" said his mother, smiling, as he ended his somewhat miscellaneous catalogue of Miss Herries' accomplishments. "Well, we must make the best of it; but I am very sorry for her disappointment."

"She'll survive!" laughed Rupert. "Only don't you go and be shy of her, mother, for she is awfully anxious about your liking her. However, there will be dear old Job here to act buffer and break the first shock, so I hope ——"

"The dog-cart is at the door, sir, and your things are all in, and I don't think you've no time to lose," announced the butler.

"All right, Saunders! I'm ready!" And with a hasty "Good-bye," Rupert dashed out of the dining-room and we heard him drive off. He had long been engaged to play on this day in a return match between the cricket clubs of his own county and the adjoining one; but until this morning—too late to give up the engagement—he had had no idea that he could not get back to dinner.

"Unfortunate, is it not?" said Mrs. Loraine, as we left the breakfast-table.

"I am inclined to agree with Rupert," I replied. "I think you will get on all the better for being thrown more completely upon each other at first."

Mrs. Loraine smiled and went off to the housekeeper's room; while I turned into the library, which was the usual morning sitting-room.

I was at this time on a visit to Helmsleigh, which is a beautiful place about seven miles from Newbury. I may, perhaps, as well state here that my name is Jane Osborne Barlow, and that "Job" was a nickname given to me by Rupert in his childhood, when he chanced to make the discovery that that name was spelled by my initials.

I first made Mrs. Loraine's acquaintance about two-and-twenty years ago, when I, then a girl of twenty, went to be Rupert's governess. Mrs. Loraine was the only child and heiress of old Mr. Loraine, of Helmsleigh, and she had married a Colonel Eliot, who had taken her name. Their own home was in London, for he had an appointment at the Horse Guards, but they were a great deal at Helmsleigh. When I first went to them, Rupert was five years old, Alice three, and Bertha only fifteen months. I was kindly and affectionately treated; I was an orphan without near relations, and the Loraines and Helmsleigh became to me as my own people and my home.

Years passed on, and troubles came in quick succession. Colonel Eliot Loraine went to the Crimea, and fell at the battle of the Alma; and his widow returned with her four children (for another boy had been born a few months after I went to them) to live with her old father at beautiful Helmsleigh, which would one day be first hers and then Rupert's. I remained with her, as her companion and the governess of the little girls. Rupert, of course, left my care at ten

years old to go to school, returning for the holidays to be the pride of our hearts and the plague of our lives; bright, handsome, merry Rupert, always in mischief, but irresistibly lovable; devoted to his mother, affectionate to his sisters, and kindly courteous to me, though devising new schemes for our torment with each succeeding day!

I helped Mrs. Loraine to nurse her father through the long and tedious illness which preceded his death; together we watched over dear little Gerald, who died of injuries received by a fall from his pony at eight years old; and, sharper grief still, we saw our sweet, gentle Bertha slowly fade and droop, and die at sixteen, in spite of all that medical skill and the tenderest care could do. We left our darling at Mentone.

The following year, Alice, being eighteen, was presented and introduced into society, and I left Helmsleigh. They wished me to remain there, but I seemed to be needed elsewhere; for old Mr. and Mrs. Eliot, the father and mother of Colonel Eliot Loraine, required a companion and housekeeper now that all their daughters were married; and they were old and infirm, and unfit to be alone together. They knew me and were willing to have me, and I felt that I could be of more use there than at Helmsleigh. For seven years now I have lived with them very happily, but I can rarely leave them. Occasionally, however, I am able to manage a visit to Helmsleigh; and I was there for a month this summer.

Mrs. Loraine was now very much alone there, for Alice had married at nineteen, and in every way to her mother's satisfaction, but had died the following year at the birth of her first child, which only survived her for a few hours. Rupert was now the only treasure left to his mother, and she idolised him. For his sake she struggled, even in early days, against her grief, and took care that Helmsleigh should continue to be a cheerful home for him, where his friends were always welcome. Rupert was very fond of her and very considerate for her; but though he nominally lived with her he was a great deal away, either travelling or paying visits. Amusements of one kind or another tempted him in every direction, and he had no real duties at home; for, though his father's fortune made him quite independent, the property was his mother's, and she had never abdicated her powers, though pleased to have his help in her rule.

Rupert's marriage had naturally been always anticipated as likely and desirable, but when it came it was inevitably an anxiety and a shock. He had returned home quite lately from visiting some friends in Devonshire, to announce to his mother that he had engaged himself to a Miss Herries, a young lady of whose existence Mrs. Loraine had never heard till that moment. She did not even know the Scott Parrys, the friends at whose house Rupert had met her. It was easily ascertained, however, that both Colonel and Mrs. Herries were people of

good birth and that there was nothing wrong about them, except poverty, which in this case could be of no consequence whatever.

Mrs. Loraine did and said all that was kind and unselfish, and at once invited Miss Herries and her parents to come to pay a visit at Helmsleigh. But Colonel Herries was an invalid and could not visit, and his wife and daughter could not leave him at the same time; therefore Rosamond, otherwise "Mona," must come alone. It was rather a formidable visit for all parties, and she was to arrive in the afternoon of the day on which Rupert had gone over to Clevelands. I was very glad to be staying at Helmsleigh at this time, for I was deeply interested in all that concerned the happiness of both mother and son. All that we knew about Miss Herries was that she was the eldest of a large family, that she was two-and-twenty, and was tall, slight, and dark-haired. Rupert would show no photograph of her. "Horrid things—only fit for the fire—none of them do her justice!" It was pleasant in these modern days to see that he was genuinely in love; the expression of it might be couched in queer phrases, and even in slang, but it was quite evident that his Mona had won his whole heart, and from that I augured well.

For Mrs. Loraine's sake, even more than for Rupert's, I was anxious to see Miss Herries. I longed to see the friend who had gone through such depths of trouble find in her son's wife a loving daughter who would appreciate her, and delight in making her life bright and pleasant. Nothing would ever make Rupert otherwise than kind and affectionate to his mother, but a wife's influence might greatly affect her happiness. To me, Mrs. Loraine was an unusually interesting person; but she was peculiar. Handsome, clever, and cultivated, and accustomed from childhood to be a person of importance, and both flattered and deferred to, she was yet curiously shy and diffident as to her own powers of winning affection, and the stiffness produced by this shyness was often mistaken for pride. She was eagerly enthusiastic, very sensitive and impulsive, and generous almost to folly; yet, with it all, she was too clever and sensible not to see through attempts to impose upon her, as soon as she allowed herself to think coolly. She was rashly lavish of assistance, of sympathy and affection, according as she fancied her friends to need them; and then was quick to see and feel, too late, that all her warm feeling and delicate generosity had been wasted. Knowing all this, I could not but be anxious to ascertain that Miss Herries was likely to understand her. I watched her all day, scarcely knowing whether to be touched or amused by her proceedings. She had selected for Miss Herries the prettiest room in the house, with a lovely view over the park, and she was in and out of it all day, adding to its attractions. She selected quite a library of such books as she herself valued, to place in the bookshelves; she gathered the prettiest flowers to make bouquets for the table; she changed a commonplace engraving for a pretty water-

colour sketch of Rupert as a child, with his dog and pony, which had always hung in her own room; and I only hoped that the girl who was on her way to Helmsleigh might be able to appreciate all the accumulated tokens of delicate welcome.

II.

"We will drive over to Newbury this afternoon, I think, Jane, and meet Miss Herries," said Mrs. Loraine after luncheon. "Saunders, tell Johnson to bring the carriage round in time for us to meet the 4.45 train. The cart must go for Miss Herries' luggage."

This was unquestionably the right thing to do, but, unfortunately, about ten minutes before we ought to have set off, the old Earl and Countess of D. came to call. They were the great people of the county, he being the Lord Lieutenant; they were also old friends, and they had driven many miles to congratulate Mrs. Loraine on her son's engagement, which had gradually become public news. There was no choice in the matter. Mrs. Loraine desired Saunders to tell the coachman to be sure to be in time for the train, and the footman to say to Miss Herries that she was sorry to be prevented from going to meet her; and then she passed on to the drawing-room to receive her guests and beg them to have their carriage put up for an hour or two. When they found that Miss Herries was expected on a first visit that very day, they ordered their carriage before the hour when she might be expected to arrive; but there had been some little delay in the stables, and they were later than they intended to be, so that they drove from the house as the returning carriage drove up to it, and we heard no second sound of wheels. Our first intimation of the arrival was the door being thrown wide open by Saunders, who announced, in his most imposing manner—"Miss Herries!"

There entered a girl, who certainly was tall, slight, and dark haired, but in every other respect was as unlike as possible what I had hoped to see. She was handsome, for she had a brilliant complexion, fine eyes, and rather good features; but, nevertheless, her appearance was a shock to me. Her hair was cut straight across her forehead, Gainsborough fashion, and was in a mass of tangled curls behind: what there might be *between* I could not tell, for there was a high Tyrolese hat on the top of the erection. Her eyes were more or less "touched," I was sure. She had very high-heeled shoes, and her dress, which was of the dark blue cambric with white spots so fashionable last summer, fell in heavy pleated folds about her feet, and was fastened back very tightly and looped up very fussily. Altogether, she looked as if she had stepped out of a Plate of Fashions as to costume, and was mentally and morally more adapted to stand behind a refreshment counter than to be Rupert's wife! I could see that Mrs. Loraine received an un-

pleasant shock; but she went forward and welcomed her cordially, saying, as she kissed her, how much she had looked forward to seeing her, and how glad she was to have her with her.

"It is so kind of you to say so!" answered Miss Herries in a voice not otherwise than sweet, but with a commonness of tone and accent which was terribly depressing.

"It is so unfortunate that Rupert cannot be back to welcome you this first evening," said Mrs. Loraine, quietly. "You must put up with only me and our dear old friend Miss Barlow, for this evening. My son was sure you would understand that he could not help it. There is a change in the trains, so that he cannot get back after the cricket match, which was an old engagement. He will be here to breakfast to-morrow."

"Oh! of course! I quite understand," said Miss Herries, with a provoking smile.

"Now let me introduce you to Miss Barlow, my dear. She was Rupert's governess long ago, and is now staying with me for a few weeks—a great pleasure to me."

So Mrs. Loraine talked on, trying to hide even from herself Miss Herries' total irresponsiveness; for, in answer to this introduction, she only bowed to me, and said, "Indeed! *How kind* of you!" to Mrs. Loraine. Saunders came in with fresh tea, which was a help to us. Mrs. Loraine said something of "regret that her father's ill-health should have prevented her mother from being able to bring her on this first coming to Helmsleigh."

"Oh, thanks! you were too kind to think of asking her! but mamma never goes anywhere."

At this moment there entered a good-looking youth of nineteen. Albert Eliot, a nephew of Mrs. Loraine (or rather, of her husband), who was being crammed for an examination of some kind by the Vicar of Helmsleigh. He had come, obviously, to inspect his future cousin. Mrs. Loraine introduced him, and, young though he was, his masculine presence worked a change in Miss Herries. She was quiet, almost demure in manner, but she was excited.

"Now, my dear," said Mrs. Loraine, a few minutes later, "I will take you to your room. We dine at half-past seven, and you will like to rest a little."

As the door closed upon them, Albert planted himself in front of me and made a comical face of amazement and disgust. "That young woman won't let her eyes grow rusty for want of use!" he said. "Miss Barlow, Rupert ought to have his head punched!"

"You will keep Mr. and Mrs. Carter waiting for dinner, Albert," I replied, as discouragingly as I could; but in my heart I felt that I agreed with him, and I went at once to my room to dress for dinner, feeling that I could not meet Mrs. Loraine. My heart ached for her

disappointment. What horrible blindness could have come over our boy? what infatuation could have made him fall in love with such a girl as this?

When I went down to the drawing-room, I found Mrs. Loraine there alone. She made no remark about Miss Herries, which in itself sufficiently showed her disappointment. Miss Herries came down in good time, prettily, though showily, dressed in white, with black lace and red ribbons, and looking undeniably very handsome. The conversation at dinner dragged painfully. Mrs. Loraine was chilled and depressed, and Miss Herries, though now quite at her ease, was unfortunate in her choice of subjects. She was evidently anxious to please, but her admiration of the place, her praises of the room assigned her, were utterly tasteless. The only sign of good taste that she showed was in abstaining from talking of Rupert—she never once mentioned him of her own accord, and barely responded to any accidental allusion to him. It was, under the circumstances, lucky, but it seemed to me unnatural. During the evening we tried every imaginable subject. She was good-natured, and very ready to talk, apparently quite unconscious of her own deficiencies. The knowledge of German, vaunted by Rupert, was the merest schoolgirl smattering; her music was not absolutely bad, but commonplace and meaningless. She was ready to profess interest in any subject that Mrs. Loraine started, but before bedtime came we both knew that the other must have discovered her to be ill-educated, unrefined, and under-bred. When we went upstairs at night, Mrs. Loraine stopped at the turning which led to her own rooms: she could evidently bear no more. "I will say good-night here, my dear," she said; "I am very tired, and Miss Barlow will kindly see that you have all you want in your room." She said good-night to *me*, too. I knew it meant that she wished to be alone, and that for the present there was to be silence even between her and me. I thought her wise and right—and how I pitied her!

I accompanied Miss Herries to her room, to see that all was as it should be. She set down her candle and closed the door. "Sit down and talk," she said, familiarly. "Put me up to a few things. You know her well, of course. Shall I find her easy to live with?"

"It is difficult to tell beforehand who will suit each other," I replied, coldly; for her easy tone displeased me. "Mrs. Loraine is a most charming person, and kindness itself."

"Rather *odd*, though, isn't she? Well! I daresay we shall do very well together; and with such a lot of us at home, and so little money, I am thankful to get away. It's always a chance, but I think I have done very well for myself."

Too much disgusted to answer, as of course it would not do to speak my mind, I merely said "Good-night," and left her.

III.

THE following morning, being Friday, there was an early service in the village church at half-past eight. I walked across the park to it, but I was a little late—the vicar was just coming out of the vestry. Mrs. Loraine was already there, but I did not go up the church to her seat; I slipped into that nearest to the door. A moment afterwards a stranger came in quietly and sat down near me.

She was a tall, graceful girl, very simply dressed, but looking, in her black skirt and brown holland polonaise, thoroughly like a high-bred lady. She was rather pale, with dark hair in simple rich coils, and long dark eyelashes, which (as I saw when she turned to smile her thanks for the offer of a footstool) shaded large dark grey eyes, with an expression so intelligent, sweet, and refined that I longed to know who she was. She left the church quickly as soon as the service was over, and walked away towards the further end of the village. I asked the clerk if he knew her. "She'll be the new young lady that came to the Grange last night to live with Mrs. George," was the reply.

Mrs. George Loraine was the widow of a cousin of *my* Mrs. Loraine. George Loraine had squandered all his own fortune, and had been idle and dissipated; but when, in failing health, he married the widow of a very rich iron-master, his love for Helmsleigh (which under his uncle's guardianship had been his home in his boyhood) showed itself by his asking for a lease of the Grange for his own life and his wife's. He added, and improved, and made a charming place of it, and his widow still lived there—just outside the village. "Mrs. George" was neither young nor handsome, but she was rich, good-natured, and "jolly," and no one could dislike her, though she *was* rather vulgar. She always had a "companion," being too sociable to like living alone; and she generally chose pretty girls, as she enjoyed taking them about with her and trying to marry them. They rarely stayed long, for she invariably began by spoiling them, and then they took liberties and were dismissed in disgrace; or else she fancied that they had designs on Rupert, whom she worshipped, like the rest of the world, and they were sent away to be out of his reach. But this girl looked most unfit for such a position. That *she* should be Mrs. George's companion, while Mona Herries was to be Rupert's wife!

I walked back to the Manor with Mrs. Loraine, but we were silent except on village topics. Just as we reached the house, Rupert drove up in his dog-cart, which had gone to meet him at the station. Mrs. Loraine kissed her hand to him, but hurried into the house as if she thought herself late. I saw that she dreaded his questions.

"Good morning, Job!" he called out, cheerily, as he pulled up. "So Mona came all right!"

"Yes," I replied.

"And how did she and mother hit it off?" he asked, as we entered the hall.

"Your mother was as kind as it was possible to be," I said: "you need not be afraid of that." I hurried upstairs to avoid further questions.

A few minutes later I looked out of my window and saw Rupert and Miss Herries standing on the lawn outside the dining-room window. His back was towards me, so I could not see what was *his* expression; but *hers* provoked me beyond endurance. How could Rupert find any attraction in such looks and manners, even though the eyes *were* handsome?

Not long afterwards, the sound of the gong took me down to breakfast. Mrs. Loraine and I met at the door; Rupert and Miss Herries came in at the open window. Mrs. Loraine greeted the young lady kindly, and then turned to Rupert and said something about being glad he had got back so early.

"I was sure to come!" he said, as he stooped to kiss his mother. "And now, tell me, how have you and Mona been been getting on? I asked Job, but she was not communicative."

Now, to be asked by your son, in the presence of a young lady who is to be your daughter-in-law, how you have got on with her, can *never* be pleasant; but when you are conscious of having taken a great dislike to her, it must be singularly disagreeable.

Mrs. Loraine looked intensely annoyed, but she tried to smile as she said, "I think I must leave that question for Mona herself to answer!"

Miss Herries, who was standing by the window looking out, neither turned round nor showed any sign of interest.

"When she appears, I'll ask her," replied Rupert, carelessly. "I wonder what makes her so late?"

"My dear Rupert!" remonstrated his mother, nervously, "do not talk so wildly."

"I am quite in earnest, mother," he said. "I think she must either be very tired, or not well, or not know her way, or something—for she is always up early, I know. What on earth are you staring at, Job? I am not at all ashamed of being anxious about her."

"I don't understand!" began Mrs. Loraine, and she looked at me to help her; for the strange conversation had brought Miss Herries to the table. "Don't tease your mother, Rupert," I said, earnestly, "but explain quietly. Is not this young lady Miss Herries?"

Rupert's look of amazement and indignation was unmistakable. It said as plainly as words could have done, "*That*—my Mona? Are you all mad?" The next moment the poor girl's look of bewilderment recalled him to a recollection of what was courteous, and he said, "I have never had the pleasure of seeing that young lady before, and do not know her name."

"I don't know what the mistake is!" said the supposed Miss Herries, turning to Mrs. Loraine with crimson cheeks and looking ready to cry. "My name is Marian Harris, and I came down to Helmsleigh yesterday to live with Mrs. Loraine."

Light broke in upon us, though how it had all happened we could not tell. Mrs. Loraine, not heeding Rupert's excited question, "But where *is* Mona?" kindly answered Miss Harris: "It is not your fault, my dear, only a mistake from the similarity of names. *You* were going to Helmsleigh Grange, I imagine, to my cousin Mrs. George Loraine. *I* sent to meet a Miss *Herries*, who is to be my daughter-in-law."

"The servant came up to me and said, Miss Harris? (at least I thought so) for Helmsleigh? and I said 'Yes,' and came here. Nothing you said showed me there was a mistake. I am very sorry," said Miss Harris, much confused.

"But, mother!" began Rupert, "*where*——"

"Mrs. George Loraine and Miss Herries!" announced Saunders, throwing open the door very wide. Rupert's face lighted up as he sprang forward to the side of the girl I had seen in church.

"Mona, my darling, what *does* all this mean?"

Mrs. George Loraine laughed. "Why, it means that young men should go to stations themselves to meet young ladies, instead of going off to cricket matches and sending the footman! *Your* young lady came to my house, and a nice dull evening she must have had, for I was dining ten miles off! And *mine*, I suppose, came here—yes, I see there she is!—Well! my dear, go and pack up your things again, for the cart will be here directly with Miss Herries' luggage, and will take yours back."

Miss Harris, embarrassed and mortified, left the room as if glad of an excuse to do so. I was sorry for her, for her position *was* awkward.

Rupert, meanwhile, had been introducing the real Mona to his mother. What a different greeting it was! Then he turned to me. "Now, Mona, here is Miss Barlow, only you don't know her by that name!"

Miss Herries put both hands into mine and raised her sweet face to be kissed, and whispered, "You will help me to learn how to be a daughter to her."

"Well, Rupert!" said Mrs. George, in her loud voice. "It was a queer way for her to come to Helmsleigh for the first time, in the omnibus from Newbury, and then find an empty house to receive her!"

"In the *omnibus!*" cried Rupert, vehemently.

"Yes, just in the common omnibus, sir!" said Mrs. George, laughing. "It is a capital joke. Tell them about it, my dear!"

Miss Herries laughed. "I got out at Newbury, saw my box out of the van, and told a porter I expected some one to meet me from Helmsleigh. He asked if I were the young lady for Mrs. Loraine's, and I said I was. Then he called out to another man, pointing to my box,

'Here you are, Tom, and that's the young lady!' I *was* rather surprised, but 'Tom' told me quite civilly that Mrs. Loraine was sorry she could not send on for me, but the Helmsleigh 'bus would put me down at the gate. So into the ''bus' of course I got, and in about an hour it *did* put me down at a lodge where a boy with a wheel-barrow was waiting. He took me and my box up to a house, where a butler informed me that Mrs. Loraine was dining out and would not be back till very late, but begged I would make myself comfortable! The housemaid would show me my room, and dinner could be ready whenever I liked."

"My poor child!" said Mrs. Loraine. "What *did* you think of such a reception?"

"I thought it very odd," replied Mona, with a smile and a blush. "I asked when Mr. Loraine was expected back from Clevelands, and was told 'not till the next morning.' So I had my dinner all by myself, as there seemed nothing else to be done."

"And were very angry!" said Rupert. "Confess, Mona! did you not begin to think of going straight home again?"

Mona laughed. "Well, perhaps I might, only I did not suppose the ''bus' was likely to be going back to Newbury that evening."

"She laughs now," said Mrs. George. "But the maids told me a different story about last night!"

"How did you make out the mistake?" asked Mrs. Loraine; for Mona coloured painfully, though she smiled, as she thought of her tears the previous evening in her solitude.

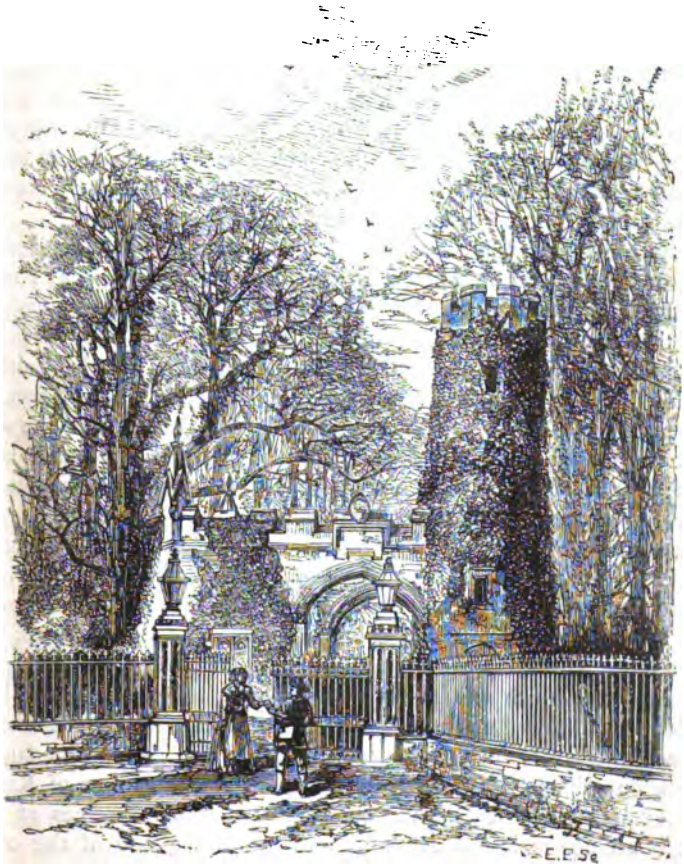
"Why, the moment she came in from church this morning, and found me in the garden, she saw I was not a bit like the photographs she had seen of *you*, Eleanor. Then we had it out in half a minute and had a good laugh over it, and I thought the best thing we could do was just to walk up here at once to breakfast. And now," added Mrs. George, laughing her jolly, unrefined laugh, "what sort of a girl is the real Miss Harris?"

"You must find out for yourself, Harriet," replied Mrs. Loraine, smiling. "Now, Mona, come up with me and take off your hat. Miss Barlow will go and bring down poor Miss Harris, and we will all have breakfast."

We had a very merry breakfast. After it was over, Mrs. George carried off poor Marian Harris, who, it appeared, was the eldest daughter of an attorney at Bristol; and being tired of home and poverty and a crowd of younger brothers and sisters, had come out to see the world as a companion. Seen in this new light, she was not a bad sort of girl; but we scarcely knew how to be thankful enough for having found that she was not to be Rupert's wife, and that this sweet and charming girl now left with us was the real Mona Herries.

A GLANCE AT KNEBWORTH.

THE fickle world has not yet forgotten Lord Lytton—once the popular prince of novelists; and Knebworth, the palace of this prince, still awakens curiosity. I will unlock its gates with an invisible



TOWER LODGE.

key; and if the reader will accompany me, we will linger long within, making notes of a thousand recollections and reflections.

Let us travel, then, to the old manorial home of the Lyttons. Living near it for years, I have become familiar with its interior, its traditions,

and its beautiful surroundings. Even if it were not associated with a name which men have delighted to honour, the place would enchant both poet and painter. As it is, it adds to its other attractions the memory of a departed man of letters.

On the London road, about thirty miles from London, and not far from the northern boundary of Hertfordshire, we approach the ivied, castellated gate-house at the south-west entrance of Knebworth Park. When the novelist's mother came into possession of the Lytton estates as heiress and sole representative of the family, she found three sides of her quadrangular mansion falling into ruin. These three sides were taken down, and the south-west gate-house, called by country people the Tower Lodge, was built with some of the fallen stones. It faithfully represents, as I have heard, one of the mediæval gateway towers of dilapidated Knebworth. We sigh as we see it, for all that is lost of the grand old house. No wonder that the heiress of the Lyttons should carefully and tenderly preserve the precious stones that belonged to its antiquity! Her love and pride must have clung to them very closely —closely as the ivy clings to the Tower Lodge.

In my childhood, I always drew near the gate-house, and gazed at the inscription on its archway with awe and delight. And as I read that Elizabeth Barbara Lytton Bulwer had made this memorial, imagination—that romancer within me—told me marvellous things of the place and its possessors. "Madam Bulwer," as the late Lord Lytton's mother was called by her villagers, seemed to stand on the shadowy ground between fact and fiction. Though she lived till 1843, to me she was only a step from the squires who wore scarlet and gold, and lace ruffles; nay, I often thought her the Tudor sovereign of her Tudor house—the Queen Elizabeth of her dominions.

Passing under the arch, and entering the park, we see a landscape of quiet sylvan beauty. Sunny glade—hill and hollow of velvet turf, dotted by trooping deer—here and there wilds of fern and dense woods —far-off avenues of lime and chestnut; and as we drive onward, the manor-house with lofty turrets and gilded vanes—all this makes an English picture which an American might wish to purchase with half his New World. Presently, tall stone gates, bearing the bittern among the reeds—crest of the Lyttons—are before us. Then the family mausoleum glimmers from a shrubbery near; and the tower of Knebworth Church rises beyond it. At length we find ourselves at the eastern entrance of the fourth and only remaining side of the once quadrangular house; and soon afterwards in its banqueting-hall.

Here we lapse into a dream. Sir Robert de Lytton must surely appear in this Tudor hall, with its heavy Venetian hangings, its banners drooping from the dim oak roof, its windows full of gorgeous heraldry —Sir Robert de Lytton, follower, friend, and counsellor of Henry the Seventh. Above us hangs his banner of Bosworth; and near the huge

fireplace stands a suit of armour worn perhaps in the battle. This is his restoration of a former Knebworth—old in the days of Richard of Gloucester. When the drama of ages passes before us, what ephemera we feel ourselves! And under a roof like this it passes before us with vivid reality. Is it more than a moment since Tudor, Vandyck, and Addisonian figures moved within these walls—since jovial Georgian squires caroused here—since a play for poor authors was acted under the Knebworth banners by the wits and humourists of our own times? Where are they now—these actors of long ago, and yesterday? They have all vanished from the stage of life; and Dickens and Jerrold have gone as entirely into the unknown darkness as the Lytton that fought at Bosworth.

Leaving the banqueting-hall, we walk from room to room, seeing everywhere faces and memorials of bygone centuries. An atmosphere of romance breathes through the oak drawing-room, on the grand staircase, in the presence-chamber, along the Tudor corridor. And some would say that this atmosphere nourished the budding genius of Edward George Earle Lytton Bulwer. But what wondrous development it would have brought about in any luxuriant imagination! "My solitude," said Keats, "is sublime. . . . I feel more and more every day that I do not live in this world alone, but in a thousand worlds. . . . No sooner am I alone, than shapes of epic greatness are stationed around me." Though genius can build out of meanest materials the palace of Aladdin, may we not wish that a Keats had been born at Knebworth? Or, looking back at the Bristol of a hundred years ago, and seeing Chatterton lie in the Redcliffe meadows to gaze at his beloved church, may we not fancifully give him the inheritance of the Lyttons, and conjecture what it might have made him? He who raised the spirits of Canynge and Rowley in the muniment-room of St. Mary Redcliffe, would have done greater things here; placed far above the splenetic pride of poverty, and the "black art of literary forgery," he would have filled Knebworth with Shakespearian characters.

Returning to Lord Lytton, we have reason to think that his precocious attempts at composition, and his devotion to authorship, were the results of his mother's teaching. A woman of cultivated taste, and a writer herself of smooth and polished verses, Mrs. Lytton Bulwer awoke in her son a love of what she loved—a sense of the fascination of literature—a longing to wield the power of poetry and prose. The boy, as soon as he could use the pen, wrote imitations of the Percy ballads—the stirring, chivalrous poems recited by his mother in the summer evenings. The facility which gave to the public more than two hundred volumes, may have had its beginning in these delights of childhood. And may we venture to add, that without this early, happy practice of composition, Bulwer might never have written a single volume? He was taught by his mother's lessons to make himself poet,

novelist, dramatist, as much as man can make himself any of these. Uninspired by the influence so eagerly received and remembered so tenderly, he would probably have given himself up to pleasure and politics, satisfying his intellect with the labours of the House of Commons, and his ambition with the honours of the House of Lords.

With such thoughts, and others that press around our footsteps, we wander about this house of enchantments—larger as it now remains than most of the great Hertfordshire houses. It would be easy to fill a magazine with the details of our progress through it; but longing to write pages, I must limit myself to a few words. Thus we leave much that is worthy of note unnoticed; and only pause where a special interest detains us. Passing along the Tudor corridor, where the name above each door tells its tale, we come to "Queen Elizabeth's Chamber." Time-worn, faded tapestry of the sixteenth century covers a part of the walls of this room; and in its massive, carved, ebon-dark bed, the great Queen may have dreamed of the Spaniards and their defeat. She came to Knebworth in the year of the Armada; and Sir Rowland Lytton, her master of the horse, must have entertained her with the costly hospitality due to his royal guest, and to the dignity of his almost palatial house. Let us pause and think of the Elizabethan days! We dream of their golden glory; and then think of the dust that lies in Henry the Seventh's Chapel, of the mouldering crimson velvet in the long-forgotten vaults described by Dean Stanley.

In nearly all the "State Chambers" we find a crowd of family and historical portraits—portraits that are something more than paint and canvas. Fancy walking among them, lamp in hand, at the witching hour of midnight! As we watch them, however incredulous and matter-of-fact we may be, we at once believe in their weird spiritualism. Do we not see gleams of strange meaning in their faces? Do they not speak to us, and touch us with revelations of another life not far away from this which so absorbs us? What whispers come from yonder knights and dames—from those royal lips—from these men of state and ladies of quality! What a supernatural calm surrounds them all! There is Mary Stuart living peaceably under the same roof with murdered Darnley, stern, judicial Murray, and Elizabeth the Pitiless. Oliver the regicide stands at the foot of the oak staircase; while the royalist, Colonel Robinson Norreys, is here; and in the gallery above, Charles the Second peers down with dark, sportive eyes—eyes that seem to have just been reading Hudibras. All rivalry, hatred, variance, and emulation are dead here. In a language which no poet can translate, these shadowy people tell us of passions which move no longer—of a record which cannot be rewritten or amended—of life lapsed into eternity. Truly we cannot wonder that the visionary Lord Lytton could never bear to be long alone with this ghostly company. Now, we see in its midst his worn face, with its searching, vivid glance—his thin, bent,

wasted figure—a presence singularly in keeping with the authorship of "Zanoni" and the "Strange Story." Had this wizard lived in mediæval days, his wanderings into the realms of magic and mystery would have led him to the stake. But the "Malleus Maleficarum" does not crush now. The world is rather fond than otherwise of its sorcerers—men who desire, like Ireland's mythical magicians, to leave wonderful works behind them.

There is one ghost here which follows me from room to room; a memory which could never have thrilled Lord Lytton with uneasy awe; but only with recollections and longings of the love that casts out fear. Though there is no life-size picture of his mother, and though her miniature is locked up in a certain rosewood cabinet in the oak drawing-room, she comes before me more distinctly than the finest work of portraiture. Her character, drawn in bold outlines of country gossip, was well known to my childhood. I have lately corrected those outlines, and filled them in with scrupulous truth.

Elizabeth Barbara Lytton Bulwer, heiress of the two ancient families of Lytton and Norreys, was descended from Cadwallader, the last British king, and from the royal Plantagenets. After the death of her husband, General Bulwer of Wood Dalling, Norfolk, this lady lived in the seclusion of her own Knebworth—that house which represents, on the ceiling of its "Presence Chamber," her forty-four armorial quarterings, and on the frieze below its cornice the arms of the illustrious families through whom she traced her descent from Edward the Third. In her retirement, she governed her domestics, villagers, and tenants with a hand of iron in a silken glove. Austere as she is said to have been, she was steadily kind to her loyal subjects and old friends. That her severity should be remembered to this day, while her goodness is forgotten, need not surprise us. Many of those she offended were the very persons to avenge themselves by painting her couleur de noir; and by telling their story in their own way through the length and breadth of the county—a story, alas! more likely to be received and repeated than any whispers of gratitude. Undutiful tenants, certain to be put down, or put out, by weapons of law, were sure to be loud about their wrongs and the tyranny of "Madam Bulwer." Foxhunters, invariably warned off her land—perhaps from that dislike to the chase not uncommon among the humane—were lavish of their oaths and curses when a fox took refuge in the woods of Knebworth. The nouveaux riches who lived near the daughter of King Cadwallader were as loud-tongued foes as any of these. Hawthorne believed that labour brutalizes. Mrs. Lytton-Bulwer believed that trade corrupts. She had a keen eye for its debasements; and could not tolerate the society of those who had bought old residences, and set up showy establishments with its gains. Thus it was that when a wealthy brewer adorned her vicinity with a pretty country house and miniature park, she was any-

thing but gracious to the new-comer—speaking openly of "those tradespeople who had come to settle at her very gates." No wonder that vulgar prosperity made a monster of this unknown neighbour of royal pedigree! And taking into consideration the alliance of enemies against her, we must read the legend of her life with care and caution—wishing to substitute portraiture for caricature.

If Mrs. Lytton Bulwer was a good hater of parvenu gentility—thinking it a thing of poor pretence—she delighted to honour well-born and well-bred poverty. In a country town not far from Knebworth, there lived, many years ago, a certain sisterhood of elderly ladies—descendants of one of our Norman kings. Dispossessed of their family fortune and position, neglected by the great, disparaged by people of shorter pedigree, and sought only by a few mendicants whom they fed from their table, these sisters lived in obscurity—"the world forgetting, by the world forgot." But they were gentlewomen; and in their seclusion they were honoured by the friendship of Mrs. Bulwer. The Knebworth carriage, with its powdered servants, was often seen at their door—that shabby door in a paltry street. And envy grew yellow when the lady of broad acres came from her palatial mansion to visit her poor friends. Would that I had memorials of one such visit! But unless it is written in imperishable books, Time is sure to bury in his great graveyard the testimony of Love. The poor ladies cannot speak to us. Their affection is as silent now as that of those dear, dumb fellow-creatures so well beloved by Mrs. Bulwer—her dogs, horses, deer, and birds. These she cared for, as tradition tells us, with a wise, tender, generous humanity—a humanity quite worthy of our best lovers of the "Animal World." She would keep no servant who was unkind to dog or horse. When making inquiries as to the character of a groom or coachman, she would say, "I am not anxious to know if the man is clever. The first question I wish to ask is this: Is he fond of horses?" By her orders, and under her supervision, the deer were liberally supplied with winter provisions. As soon as the park became short of grass, fodder was always given to them; and in addition to their daily meal, they then enjoyed a dessert of chestnuts, gathered each year from the avenues and shrubberies, and stored up for December and January. When we hear of rich men allowing their deer to starve for months, so that the poor creatures are often found dead in their parks for want of food, let us think kindly of this departed mistress of Knebworth. The heart that is full of love for dumb pensioners can never be hard or merciless.

As my sketch of Mrs. Lytton Bulwer is very incomplete, it will be well to copy from the work of one who saw her with the eyes that see most deeply into character—those of near and devoted affection. Prefixed to the first collected edition of the Bulwer novels, we find the following dedication:—

MY DEAR MOTHER,—

In inscribing with your beloved and honoured name this collection of my works, I could wish that the fruits of my manhood were worthier of the tender and anxious pains bestowed on my education in youth.

Left yet young, and with no ordinary accomplishments, the sole guardian of your sons, to them you devoted the best years of your useful and spotless life; and any success it may be their fate to attain in the paths they have severally chosen, would have its principal sweetness in the thought that such success was the reward of one whose hand aided every struggle, and whose heart sympathised in every care.

From your graceful and accomplished taste, I early learned that affection for literature, which has exercised so large an influence over the pursuits of my life; and you who were my first guide were my earliest critic. Do you remember the summer days which seemed to me so short, when you repeated to me those old ballads with which Percy revived the decaying spirit of our national muse; or the smooth couplets of Pope—or those gentle and polished verses with the composition of which you beguiled your own earlier leisure? It was those easier lessons far more than the harsher rudiments learned afterwards in the schools, that taught me to admire and to imitate; and in them I recognise the germs of the flowers, however perishable they be, that I now bind up and lay upon a shrine, hallowed by a thousand memories of unspeakable affection. Happy, while I borrowed from your taste, could I have found it not more difficult to imitate your virtues—your spirit of active and extensive benevolence, your cheerful piety—and all the qualities that brighten a nature more free from the thought of self than any it has been my lot to meet with. Never more than at this moment did I wish that my writings might outlive my time, so that these lines might remain a record of the excellence of the mother and the gratitude of the son.

E. L. B.

These are glowing touches. They help me to soften the face that some would make cold and severe. They enable me to finish it with life-like colour; and so to place on my canvas the real Mrs. Lytton Bulwer.

As we linger through the spacious rooms, descend the broad oak staircase, and pass out by way of the banqueting-hall, another memory haunts me. It is that of Emily Elizabeth, Lord Lytton's only daughter—a young girl who followed her grandmother to the family mausoleum in 1845. Looking back, one laments the death of this daughter. Her life might have brightened the Knebworth of that time, and linked its dignity with the graces of youth. A young, imaginative, joyous maiden must add an exquisite charm to the shadowy romance of such a house as this—just as Phœbe carried a sunbeam to the Seven Gables of the Pyncheons.

We pass out. After spending an hour in the gardens, where the late lord indulged in many vagaries of taste, we depart homeward, taking, as we drive away, another glance at the park. Speeding towards the Tower Lodge, we see far off to the west a fishing-cottage. This summer retreat, in which the novelist wrote some of his works, is cradled in green woods, and mirrored in a miniature lake. He has described it in "The Student," and shown us where he probably dreamed his first dream of Nymphalin. But laborious art can seldom paint the fairies of childhood. The progress of the "Pilgrims of the

Rhine" must have seemed to its author insipid and artificial when he thought of the fancies that once haunted the little pool in the woods —fancies more ethereal than the blue butterflies that flitted about its banks.

Now we reach the gate-house, leaving behind us the green glades, the wilds of fern, the avenues of chestnut and lime just touched with russet and yellow. Not very much more than a year ago, the late owner of the place drove daily through these gates. Still possessed of unfailing energy, and about, with his old facility of pen, to complete "Kenelm Chillingley," he was then, nevertheless, a mere shadow of his former self—a wreck of the once gay man of the world. Seeing him here, one could scarcely help recalling those painfully expressive words written not long before his latter days, and in that last autumn full of dreary meaning :—

"I do not know how it is, but every year I visit these scenes I have more need of their solace. My departed youth rises before me in more wan and melancholy hues; and the past saddens me more deeply with the present. . . . It is not the mind that has been disappointed—it is the heart. What ties are broken—what affections marred! The Egeria of my hopes—no cell conceals, no spell can invoke her now. . . . ."

Nearly every afternoon of the mild November of 1872, the once brilliant prince of society might be seen in a dull country town near Knebworth. Leaving his carriage, and leaning on the arm of a friend, he walked slowly—very slowly—through the quiet streets, looking, perhaps, at quaint windows and gables of bygone centuries, and often attracted by a certain dusky, low-ceiled curiosity shop. In such a place, Tradition may still tell her tales. Did she never tell Lord Lytton that Eugene Aram lived within a stone's-throw of this shop? A tall, three-storied house, which occupies a nook near the church-yard, and whose garden opens out among graves, was, for a time, the dwelling of the unhappy scholar—hero of many a young lady during the reign of the popular novel of 1832. There he is said to have kept a school; and there he was no doubt followed by the spectre from St. Robert's Cave. In that very house, I visited, years ago, a poor, dying lady. Partially paralysed—panting as if from asthma—racked by tortures—the sufferer maintained a marvellous composure under her peine forte et dure. Who could visit her without feeling that her agonies were less terrible than those of Aram? In the rooms where peace not unfrequently followed her pain—peace serene and sweet as that of an opiate—the man of remorse must have felt himself in the halls of Eblis, with the flames about his heart. So it seems to us, if we accept the truth of Hood's poem, rather than the high-flown Byronism of the Bulwer romance. And most of us find in the poet's "Dream" the real, living Aram. Looking back, with the anguish

of the lost, on his Yorkshire schoolboys, he speaks in these verses:—

Oh Heaven! to think of their white souls,
And mine so black and grim!
I could not share in childish prayer,
Nor join in evening hymn:
Like a devil of the pit I seemed,
'Mid holy Cherubim.

And peace went with them one and all,
And each calm pillow spread;
But Guilt was my grim Chamberlain
That lighted me to bed;
And drew my midnight curtains round,
With fingers bloody red!

When we listen to such a voice as this, what a relief it is to think, with a great thinker, that "wherever men are conscious of a remorse which stays with them and moves with them, there is a cry ascending to some power, known or unknown—DELIVER US FROM EVIL"!* Wandering from county to county—a fugitive Cain—Eugene Aram came to the vicinity of the Lytton manor-house as master of a school. In the Hertfordshire town where he sojourned, no trace of him is to be found but this bare fact. But thus much proved beyond a doubt, we may conjecture that he sometimes led his scholars through the Knebworth lanes in quest of woodland or wayside plants. A self-taught proficient in mathematics, philology, and many abstruse studies, he became in his poverty and obscurity a power among the learned. But ambition may have moved him less than the love of knowledge for its own sake, or the desire to shut out conscience by incessant occupation of mind. Certain it is that he went from study to study, just as he went from place to place. At one time he travelled far into ancient European languages, and also into Hebrew, Chaldaic, and Arabic; at another he made himself master of history, poetry, and antiquarian lore—of heraldry, botany, and the science of the herbalist. A great, comprehensive genius—the self-made king of a vast intellectual kingdom—this man was destined to hang on a gibbet in Knaresborough Forest. What a story for romancer, dramatist, moralist!

And now, gentle reader, farewell to our companionship. We have seen something of Knebworth; and have journeyed to a town near it. Here the house of the Lyttons is out of sight, and our excursion is ended.

* Maurice.

AN EVERY-DAY STORY.

"TWO lovers walking under the evening sky" is the most commonplace picture possible, yet I must draw it if I am to tell my story. First in the gardens of the primal Eden, always since in the ruined Paradise we call the Earth, have wandered these pairs of beautiful, happy creatures, in the world but not of it—lifted above its common joys, beyond its vulgar cares, by the engrossing delirium that has seized upon them and made a fairyland of homeliest scenes. The bright sun shines, the soft moon beams, for them alone; for them the flowers bloom, the winds blow gently, the roadside grasses grow, the woodlands hold their light and their shade, and the meadows smile: all to make an Arcadia as evanescent as their vows. The spring has a brighter beauty, the summer day a sweeter languor, the autumn a more golden glory, and the winter snows cannot chill their glowing hearts; while all eyes not wholly cold, all souls not wholly dead, must burn and thrill to see them. And then—and then—the fever cools, the beauty dies, the glory fades, and there comes the awaking.

Two handsome, happy children they were: for what could they be called else but children—the one twenty, the other sixteen? and they loitered in the lanes and walks that skirted Hayford Parsonage, of which the Rev. Arthur Halcroft was incumbent. The girl was his motherless daughter, Rosalie; the young man was one of whom he did not know much, but whom he would not have chosen as the companion of her walks, had he been consulted in the matter.

But the Reverend Mr. Halcroft was not consulted. He sat in his shaded study poring over his sermon for to-morrow, amending its crudities and referring to the various books that littered his table, or lying back in his easy chair in a long reverie, as was his frequent custom, with his eyes fixed on his dead wife's portrait. Quite forgetful, was he, of the flight of time, till a sharp knock at the door announced a visitor he especially dreaded—a gossiping widow, who, as all the parish knew, was "setting her cap" at him.

Mrs. Dale, the widow, took her seat in the clergyman's study, and consulted him upon some parish business for which she had ostensibly come. That over, she passed to other matters. She was not an ill-natured woman; but she did consider that the parsonage children needed a step-mother, very especially the parson's daughter: and she would have liked to fill the post.

Rosalie, meanwhile, reached the gate, lingering there when she had passed through it, to watch the receding figure of her lover, and dream over it in the favouring darkness. Her hand was still thrilling with his

parting clasp, her eyes were still burning with the reflected light of his —those wonderful lustrous eyes that surely had rarely had their compeers—her ears listening still to the last melody of his voice: and few voices were so melodious as Bertram Payne's. Few men had been gifted with beauty such as his—beauty of face and of form. Handsome, slender, graceful, his features of a perfect type, he was, she thought, fit to win a princess, and proud enough to be the peer of anything earthly—of herself, who had once been haughty, even to him, as it was Rosalie Halcroft's disposition to be; but she was humble enough at heart now, in the deep love she bore him.

She regretted that she had not shown it more to-night, this love; that she had not broken through the bounds of her reserve and pride, inborn and hard to conquer—for one who was surely worthy of the trust she felt but could not speak. To-night he seemed more than ever dear, more than usually fond and tender, for he had been absent for several weeks, and had changed for the better even in that little time—grown more manly and more energetic, more determined and more hopeful; and that unspoken passion which softened his eyes and mellowed his voice, would, she instinctively felt, have found words to-night but for her coldness.

She did not yet go in; her breath still came quickly, her cheeks burned, her hands trembled, and her heart throbbed audibly. She could not meet the inquiries and greetings of the four noisy boys, her brothers, whom she heard conning their lessons beyond the open door, and ready to be disturbed from their unwelcome task by her entrance; so she lingered at the gate, and dreamed.

Rosalie found material for her thoughts in the sweet remembrance of the short past, since she had known Bertram Payne. She recalled the incidents of their first acquaintance, the pretexts upon which he had met her, the trifling tokens that betrayed his love, the secret, gradual growth of the power that drew their hearts together, making them nearer and dearer to each other than all the world beside. Till at last they stood, as they had for many weeks now, lingering on the borders of the enchanted land, trembling with delightful awe, yet unable to pass those barriers of silence and reserve which in true love always attends youth and inexperience. But this silence was weakening with every sweet, embarrassed meeting, and ready to fall before one impulsive word—a word which neither had spoken to-night.

But to-night the confession had trembled on his lips, which she half-feared, half-wished, to hear, and her coldness had driven it back: but not for long. A new light of hope and courage was shining in his splendid eyes, a new determination curved those beautiful lips; lines of thought and care marked his young face, and made it more admirable in her sight, as it was more strong and manly and incomprehensible. She herself was no longer a child: she felt older in these few eventful

months, than years had made her. The heart's awakening had brought to her a wider and graver experience than she had learnt in all the motherly and housekeeping cares that had been hers since her mother died.

Calm now, she went in out of the darkness, passing by the study door, where she heard a sharp voice she knew, preferring rather to join her brothers than to enccunter its owner. But she caught a word of the tale it was telling: that arrested her. Presently Mrs. Dale took her leave, and went out, ignorant of the pale, drooping figure in the passage. Then she rose up, and entered the room where her motherless boys were wrangling over their lessons, soothed them with her quiet authority, and sat down by the open window, cold and white, to wait for the blow to come.

She heard her father's uncertain step in the hall, his gentle voice calling her name, and she went to him without a word and followed him into his study; but the air of the room struck a chill to her heart as her feet crossed its threshold.

Mr. Halcroft was tremulous and agitated—he was a mild, nervous man, who hated a scene, and dreaded the part he had to play in the present one. He fumbled over the books on the table, hesitated long for the proper words, and finally broke down altogether, as he caught sight of her mother's picture, so like—just above her head.

"My daughter," he faltered.

She sat before him, cold and stern as he had never seen her—waiting.

"My child," he stammered, "I have just received a great blow. I fear there is one also for you, if—if my information is correct. It is—a severe shock to me, and I have but one course to take, however painful."

She made a gesture of impatience and tried to speak, but failed. What *right* had Mrs. Dale to come and make mischief about her?

"I don't blame you, I can't blame you, my darling," said the clergyman. "You are young and motherless; I have been absorbed and neglectful—I deeply repent it. You were a child, Rosalie, and knew not what you did; your disobedience is your father's fault more than yours. Forgive him, my dear: he cannot forgive himself."

Rosalie's head drooped, and her breast heaved. She had not thought before, absorbed in her heart's sweet secret, her mind's fever, how neglectful she had been of a child's first duty towards him—her only parent—how wanting in confidence and love.

"Heaven knows I have no right to be proud—a poor, obscure country clergyman, I dared hope for no exalted lot for you, Rosalie, lovely as you are—the image of your lovely mother. But—Mr. Payne is *not* your equal: and there are other and worse reasons why he cannot aspire to you."

"Tell me all, papa," she gasped.

Mr. Halcroft took her burning hands in his, and told a disgraceful tale. This young Bertram Payne was a *gambler*. He had (during these few recent weeks of absence) been abroad to where gamblers resort, had won largely, and was come back laden with his gains.

"It is not true; I will never believe it," she broke out, with painful, passionate vehemence.

"It is quite true, Rosalie," answered the clergyman, sadly. "You shall be convinced of it yourself if you will. In one respect the young man is honourable, for he is no liar: when taxed with it by one who had a right to question him, he allowed its truth. My child, you cannot marry a gambler. It is the worst vice, save one, that man can acquire."

"No, no, I cannot marry him," acquiesced Rosalie, rising up with trembling lips and pallid face. "Papa, for your sake, for all our sakes, I renounce Bertram Payne."

So Mr. Payne and Miss Halcroft met no more—except at church, where his eyes would dwell on her pale face until it burned with feverish crimson beneath his gaze, though her look was turned away in resolute avoidance; or when they encountered in the street, where he lingered to meet her, and flushed and trembled: but she passed on with a cold bow. He was too proud to plead, too remorseful to resent, but she knew by intuition as she sat weeping in her chamber, the passionate words of explanation he wrote, and tore, and flung away, and never sent.

"Rosalie, I did it for you. I won to win you; I knew it was the surest road to fortune, and fortune sanctions love. Poor, I could not address you; rich, I might dare to ask. I never remembered it was a sin, I only remembered your sweet words and lovely looks. I never thought of wrong, I only thought of you—Rosalie."

Over and over again these or some such words of excuse were gone over in her mind. They were very near the truth. Only—he had not at first staked to win, but only out of idleness, only from example: when he found he was indeed winning—for he had a strange and wonderful run of luck in the German town—he went on pursuing it, thinking of Rosalie.

But, had he explained all this and sued for pardon, what would it have availed against the mild horror of the Christian minister, or the fierce virtue of the village gossips; least of all the shocked pride of his beloved? To her maidenly inexperience, the sin of gambling looked so very dark and horrible. The Reverend Mr. Halcroft held an interview with the offender, and there and then cut the cord of the past—and with it the heart's life of his daughter.

Poor Rosalie, striving her best for outward composure, could but weep and droop, and grow more listless day by day, and wring her father's heart with useless sorrow. At last, despairing of his own treatment, and doubting his knowledge of womanly nature, he wrote a

long letter to his sister, Mrs. Haydn, and begged her to advise him what to do for his daughter in the case he described.

Mrs. Haydn arrived herself in answer. A handsome, rich, fashionable, prosperously married woman, with a talent for management. She came primed with much excellent advice; but was startled at the first sight of Rosalie's beauty. The flexile, graceful shape, the stately little head, the oval face, with hair, eyes, brows and lashes of the same rare shade, the lips of delicate red, the pretty smile and clear pallor of complexion, were all marked with the keen eye of a connoisseur; and she hastened to charge herself with the care of Rosalie's future, and assure her brother that, with a proper education, his daughter had all the requisites for making a great sensation in society, and eventually a splendid match; none the worse qualified by this early experience of a foolish fever. It did not hinder girls' prospects, she said, or cause them to make less good wives.

She took Rosalie back with her to her home in town. Having no children of her own, the charge was pleasant rather than otherwise. Once there, she caused the girl to be provided with the best of masters, and gave her herself the best of training—for a fashionable life. Close upon this, the Reverend Mr. Halcroft had a living given him quite unexpectedly near town, and removed to it: so that all associations with the old home were severed for Rosalie. "So much the better," said Mrs. Haydn.

Thus passed three years. At nineteen, Rosalie was introduced into society by her aunt, to become at once its loveliest ornament, and achieve all the success that had been promised for her by vanquishing a somewhat stern gentleman and great match, Mr. Linden, who had hitherto been held to be impregnable. Accustomed to be courted—beset, in fact—Rosalie's cold indifference piqued him, her rare beauty charmed him; and he soon found himself as violently in love as it was possible for a man of his temperament to be.

Left to herself, Miss Halcroft might have declined him, for not an atom of love for him touched *her* heart; but Mrs. Haydn was imperative, and as good as settled things for her. Decline Mr. Linden!—the best match of the season! no, no; that would never do. And Rosalie, who had learnt to appreciate the good things of this world that the gods provide for lucky people, accepted him. At twenty she became Mrs. Linden.

Then succeeded a life of placid elegance, of luxurious ease. For the first time in her experience every exquisite taste could be delighted, every delicate sense gratified, and all her desires and wishes fulfilled. All? Was there no yearning in her heart that her husband's calm kindness could not satisfy? no chamber in her soul that his self-complacent image could not fill? Who knew what had become of the poor prodigal, Bertram Payne, who lost honour, happiness, and

reputation for her sake?—the ruined boy who, even in his one first bitter abasement, had been too proud to seek her pity by word or sign from that day, and of whom she had had no token all these years.

Time passed. Mrs. Linden had no children. She did a great deal for her young brothers, and loved them much.

Five years later the Rev. Arthur Halcroft died of a lingering malady, a kind of decline. His dearly beloved daughter was everything to him; and he caused her to promise that his remains should be taken down to the churchyard of that first parsonage of his, Hayford, and laid to repose by the side of his wife. Rosalie trembled and wept as she promised this; but she wept much at that time. In the end, she was too ill to go on the sad journey, but remained at home, weeping hysterically, feeble and feverish, and shivering at the very name of Hayford, as they noticed for many weeks. But her grief wore itself out in time; she reappeared in society, rarely beautiful in her black robes, and arranged to go down with her husband to visit Hayford during the next summer, and see to the grave.

But, when the appointed time for the journey came, Mr. Linden was himself ill. Rosalie would have again put her visit off, but an architect was to meet her at Hayford to receive instructions for a monument in the church; and so she started alone, taking her carriage and servants. Mr. Linden insisted on that: it would be more comfortable for her, he thought. Halting at a town conveniently near, she drove the next morning to Hayford.

Her pale face looked forth wistfully from the carriage windows, but she could recognize familiar features only in the landscape, not in the changed objects nearer home. Hayford had ceased to be a quiet, rural village, and become a bustling "terminus;" the railroad had revolutionized everything. Handsome brick buildings had replaced the primitive old shops; a fine hotel had usurped the site of the homely inn; and showy modern villas and cottages ornés appeared everywhere. The time-worn dwellings she had known as a child seemed to have disappeared. Those that remained were tricked out with new paint and plaster, pillared porticoes and deep bay windows, Venetian blinds and Italian shades. Even the old school-house past which she had so often wandered, learning logic in the light of Bertram Payne's beautiful eyes, was transformed into a dashing "Hayford College." Sick at heart, she drove to the new hotel, left her carriage and servants there, and set out on foot to visit in private her father and mother's grave.

She had feared to find the church and cemetery unrecognizable, perhaps even the parsonage gone; but the changes that had revolutionized the village higher up had not extended so far as this. The familiar houses, embowered in old-fashioned shrubberies; the dark stone church, with its "white harvest-fields of dead" stretching

around and beyond it; the low-browed parsonage, hidden by royal elms; the dear old grassy lanes, the little white gate between the laurels; all were there, untouched by change.

Continuing her way, scarcely pausing to look at the old house, she gained the solitary churchyard, and stood in the dark and sheltered corner of it that contained the grave: giving way for some time to her grief. Then other memories crowded upon her mind; the past, with all its sweetness, all its sadness, came back once more, not as a vague pain, a half-forgotten vision, but a living truth, a vivid reality, to which all these dear and well-remembered scenes bore silent witness. She had fancied that this page in her life was for ever turned, her suffering stilled, her peace found; but in that lonely hour, among those solemn shades, it stood confessed a living presence yet, whose content was stupor, whose repose was death. And she burst into sobs of passionate agony.

Some movement aroused her. Was she dreaming—deceived by her disordered senses? Or was it a spirit who stood there—in form and face wonderfully beautiful as when they had last parted? Long mourned, long wept, long pitied, had the strong yearning of his old beloved called him from some fresh or distant grave to meet at the trysting-place? For, not having heard of Bertram Payne for all these years, she had deemed him dead. No, it was no spirit. A spirit would not have breathed her name, "Rosalie"—would not have sprung forward to meet her; then, putting a visible constraint on voice and face, suddenly checked the eager impulse, though she could hear the rapid beating of his heart.

Her own beat scarcely less rapidly, and a film came over her eyes. But the instinct of custom and propriety triumphed over the transient tumult, and she stood before him in a moment, calm and majestic, outwardly the elegant, fashionable woman, Mrs. Linden; but inwardly feeling all the impassioned love of the girl Rosalie of ten years before surging in her breast as she gazed.

They spoke little, and neither named the past—the past as regarded themselves. Mrs. Linden told him her errand there—to look at her father's grave.

"I come here also," said Mr. Payne; "come here often. Mr. Halcroft was my dear friend, my only comforter for years. He led me back to the right path; through him I lived down that mistake of my early life, and became what I am—honoured and respected."

"Your friend—when?" she asked, in involuntary surprise.

"As soon as you had left. He sought me out."

"And *you* did not seek me out!" all but fell from her lips. He read it in her eyes; read the reproach.

"He said it must not be; that you were lost to me for ever. I could not go against him, Rosalie."

They wandered restlessly on, not daring to linger where nothing must be said, or wild emotions recalled, each heart too full for the pretence of ordinary speech. They remembered how last they had strolled down this lane together, silently as now, but encircled by an atmosphere of invisible enchantment, trembling with fearful happiness, burning with hidden devotion, and neither daring by words to dissolve the spell of the sweet embarrassment that bound them. Now—with those worn and wasted hearts, those heavy eyes, those weary feet, those lives from which all bright illusions and charmed dreams had departed before cold and stern realities—what mockery it seemed to wander in the dear old lane! What a bitter travesty of lovers' walks for them—a sobered man, a saddened woman—to tread the green, familiar path their feet had worn ten years ago, in the sweet spring-time of their early love!

He broke the silence of their sad thoughts first. "You are married, Rosalie?" he said: for this was no time for conventionalities or to call her by any name but the one so familiar to his lips.

"Yes."

"And you have children?"

"None."

"I have one. I—I named her after you. I sometimes fancy there is a resemblance to—that her smile and her eyes are like yours: her hair is the same shade. Will you—will you come in with me and see my wife and child?"

A moment's pause: but the sweet fascination of that pleading voice lay upon her as of yore, and she yielded to it.

"Yes, Bertram, I will go in with you."

It was close by the parsonage, as near as might be to the Mecca of his thoughts—a lovely cottage-villa, such as long ago she had seen in her dreams, hidden in a blossoming wilderness of vines and flowers and drooping trees. The world had prospered with Mr. Payne; relatives had died and enriched him: and this, his home, was beautiful.

An over-dressed, common-place woman sat in the room she entered, and was introduced as "My wife, Mrs. Payne." How she, and the name, and the "wife" all struck and jarred on Rosalie's nerves, she remembered for many a long day.

Mr. Payne brought up to her a sweet child of two years old, whom he called Baby Rose: a pretty, delicate flower, who certainly *had* somewhat of the elder Rosalie's look about her. Sitting down, he took her on his knee, holding her lovingly to him while they talked.

Rosalie had leisure to impress it all upon her memory; while the mother settled her flounces, arranged her laces, passed her jewelled hands over her hair, and scrutinized the mourning robes of her guest. Mrs. Payne entered on a gossiping history of the present doings of the neighbourhood, to which until her marriage she had been a stranger.

He listened in silence—possibly contrasting bitterly the two women—pressing his child's soft cheeks to his, caressing her golden hair; bending his proud head to catch her sweet whispers, with the lovelight Rosalie knew so well shining in those wonderful eyes, under their drooping lashes, upon his little daughter, whose innocent caresses kept his soul alive. She watched it all. Never had Bertram Payne seemed to her so beautiful, so dear; her whole heart went out towards him, as he bent over his baby's face. There was a look of suffering and conquest upon his brow; lines of pain and struggle were graven deeply there—marks of sorrow past, of combat won, that purified and ennobled his features beyond their mere beauty. He seemed to her partial and yet experienced eyes the type of the ideal for which her girlish heart had pined, which her womanly soul had yearned for all these years. Pure, faithful, fond, there he sat in her sight, crowned with his perfect manhood, and worthy of her love as she had dreamed he was so many weary years before. The thoughts of those years came back to her as she sat; even the very words that she had then longed to go and pour forth to him in what she took to be his shame and his sin. "Though the whole world forsake you, Bertram, I am true; though you be stained and shameful, I will weep you clean; though you may be deserted, I will cling to you; though you be despised, I will honour you; though you be ruined, I will exalt you; though none else may, with all my heart, and soul, and being, I will worship you still, my adored, my prince, my lord!"

Ah, the foolish enthusiasm of our youth! It was all over now, however, and they sat there under the cares and the realities of the world, cold-mannered, cautious, as the world's best men and women.

And what were his thoughts? She could not tell, but her imagination pictured them as perhaps they were. There could be no mistake that his love for her was still fresh and green: that he would give much to be able to clasp her innocently for one single moment to his aching heart.

Mr. Payne raised his drooping eyes, and met hers, with a long, long, yearning look. It seemed to tell her all the past. The days of childish heartbreak, the nights of sleepless pain, the perpetual feverish longings, the constant burden of despair. And then the gradual stupor of patience; the numb indifference, the cold languor that followed; succeeded at length by the life of calm repose, of gliding ease and polished luxury, of half-satisfied content, of real indifference: the whole somewhat of a dream, a trance, a sleep. Yes, yes, they read each other well.

The lady in the arm-chair saw nothing of this emotion; she was quite unconscious of being the third party in a scene, the spectator to a silent, sad drama of memory. Having talked to her satisfaction, and twirled her bracelets and her rings while doing it—*not* unconsciously,

in the absence of a pre-occupied mind—she called her daughter to come to her: papa had nursed her long enough. He carried his child across the rug, and put her on her mother's knee. Rosalie watched it all. She saw her hold it in her arms where his had been, and press her lips on the brow still warm with his kisses. Alas! the child was hers —she had the right to do all this.

Mrs. Linden rose to end her visit. Bertram Payne went out with her to see her as far as the gate. The sun was shining. The hour of brief delirium was over: it had seemed like delirium to Rosalie. Whatever their inward feelings might be, they must be hidden from the world and from each other. The phantom of the elderly and precise James Linden; the spectre of the fussy, showy woman in the magnificent lounging-chair, rose between them, forbidding any reference to the past, confining speech to reason and reality.

"Shall I see you again?" asked Mr. Payne.

"I fear not. The architect is to meet me presently: he may be already at the hotel. And then I leave again."

"Good-bye, Mrs. Linden."

"Good-bye, Bertram."

Their hands met. Once more his glance rested on her pale, perfect face; once more her look was lifted to his beautiful eyes in a mute farewell. Then the hands unclasped, and they parted, to meet never more, in all probability, in this short-sighted world.

For their paths in it lay wide apart. Hers in the gay and bustling area of what is called town life; his in his secluded home in the remote country district of Hayford.

There are more aching hearts, more lives marred by mistakes and disappointments than some of us think for. But we see them not.

A LADY OF ST. CYR.

By Mrs. Jerome Mercier.

"NO, no, mademoiselle, that cannot be: the ladies are entering at the present moment, and this room is necessary for their servants. Go to my apartment, my child, and I will give you a cake."

The little fair-skinned, dark-eyed creature whom the good concierge was addressing drew her small self up in sorrowful dignity to the limit of full half an inch above her former height, as the word "servants" was pronounced.

"They are, then, servants who are coming into my mother's room?" she asked, in a clear, refined voice.

"But certainly, mademoiselle: does the little darling suppose that a lady who comes in a coach would require this chamber au sixième for her own use? Come, go quietly to my rooms, and you shall be my visitor—till some good *sœur* takes you into her care," added the concierge, under her breath.

The small personage whom she so respectfully called mademoiselle was a child of some nine years old, but with a premature maturity in her thin, clear-cut features. She was dressed in a quaint garment of a rich brocade, such as might have been used for furniture in some palatial home; but it was torn, worn, and faded till its original colour was hardly discoverable. The poor little shoes were very, very old, and scarcely covered a pair of slender, well-made feet. On the child's neck glittered a row of golden beads and a medallion, and a single black bow upon her frock seemed to be less designed for ornament than as symbol of a recent loss.

The little girl turned without another word to leave the wretched room.

"Take your bag, chérie," said the good woman, lifting from the table a bulging package, evidently containing all the child's possessions, and yet not too heavy for her small strength. She took it in her hand, and then putting out the other with an air of infinite graciousness, she said:

"Adieu, madame, et merci bien." Perhaps the portress might have been surprised at this formal farewell had she given a thought to the child, but a bustle and confusion were heard below, and she ran off hastily to receive the new occupants.

The child followed slowly, going step by step down the long stairs, as if she regretted and loved her wretched home. Au premier there were noise and confusion such as only French tongues can make. The little girl, as she passed the chattering group unnoticed—the fine lady with

her fan and parrot and little mirror; the gentleman gesticulating and scolding his lackeys—looked at them with a strange, grave sadness. The logs were crackling merrily on the portress's hearth, but the child did not even pause at the open door; she walked straight forth under the arch of the porte-cochère, where the wind blew about her tattered brocade, and then out into the open street itself. That bleak north-east wind, which often blows in Paris, was making a second winter of the spring, but the little maid walked forth alone on her aimless course. Not fourteen days before her mother had been carried dead from that poor home; her widowed mother, whose grace and beauty seemed to the child without a parallel. Lucie Lemeunier scarcely realized the goodness of the people who had fed and sheltered her during that weary time of bereavement: the ignorance and unconscious selfishness of childhood seldom permit of gratitude for our "daily bread;" but now the innate pride of the little aristocrat surged up in a revolt against the desecration of her mother's home by the "canaille" who were to enter it. Sooner than witness this, she would go forth and die; she could but die at the worst, and had not her mother died?

The beautiful and noble Marie de Ste. Barbe had married the artist Paul Lemeunier, handsome, good, and clever, but alas! not noble; and what virtue could wipe out this stain in the eyes of the family of Ste. Barbe? Henceforth Marie was dead to them, nor would they shelter or pity her when her husband died of a lingering sickness, and her few remaining jewels were melting away, all too rapidly, before the fiery breath of want. Death alone was kind, in dealing the final blow so swiftly that the poor mother had barely time to realize the dread solitude in which her little one would be left.

On went that poor little one through the crowd of strangers, supposing, with the fatuity of childhood, that she would come to some end and home at last. But presently it began to rain, and the raindrops froze as they fell, and the poor little soul, noble though she was, was as hungry as the most plebeian of the small Parisians. But it was not well-bred to cry; ladies should bear all and say nothing. Yet, even a lady must eat, and at last the pains of hunger became by far the most pressing circumstances in the little girl's existence. When her mother and she had wanted bread before, the mother's fingers had earned it by the dainty embroideries which she had learned in her convent-school. Lucie could not sew now, but there was one thing she could do—she could sing. And so the small, shrill voice sent up, in a clear tone, a pretty little pastoral ditty composed by Durant:—

"J'ai couru tous ces bocages,
Ces prés, ces monts, ces rivages;
Mais je n'ai trouvé pourtant
Celle que j'ai poursuivie:
Hélas! qui me l'a ravie,
La nymphe que j'aimais tant?"

A carriage came rolling by. "Stop!" cried a clear, resolute voice. The carriage stopped, and presently a footman came to the child and told her, with a tone which showed how unworthy he thought her of the honour, that "Madame" desired to speak with her.

"Madame" was bending forward in the carriage to receive the little singer: a somewhat heavy, noble face, with penetrating eyes and an expression of profound weariness; a cloak, rich, dark, and simple, drawn around the figure, and a hood of the same stuff covering the abundant hair.

With a disregard of himself which rather astonished that majestic person, the little lady passed the footman—her bag still tightly grasped in her hand—and went and stood solemnly before the carriage-door. She then saw that two faces were looking at her; that of the lady in the dark hood, and another with a bright, arch, child-like face, surrounded by little rings of curls. The silver-set mirror, which, like all ladies of quality, she carried in her hand, caught a gleam or glimmer from one of the oil lamps in the street, and sent up a flash upon a sweet, smiling mouth and two kind eyes, looking on the child with interest.

"Make your reverence, my child; you are in the presence of Madame the Duchess of Burgundy," said the elder lady to little Lucie, who obeyed with a careful and courtly grace. The bright young creature laughed a musical laugh.

"Do not frighten the little one, ma tante; if she knew she was in the presence of Madame de Maintenon, she would have cause to make her reverence much more humbly."

"How do you come to be singing in the streets alone so late and in such cold and windy weather, my child?" asked the elder lady, who had been called Madame de Maintenon. "Have you a mother?"

"Neither father nor mother living, madame," answered the child. "My mother is dead; I have her portrait in this medallion; and servants were coming into my mother's apartment, and I could not stay to see it; so I came away; and I was hungry"—and a burst of tears ended the confession.

"Poor little one," "Pauvre mignonne," "Pauvrette;" with every kind, endearing term, the kind ladies soothed her. They made her enter the carriage, and bade the coachman stop at a confectioner's. A cake was some solace to the little hungry soul, and while she was eating it, her friends were holding a whispering consultation concerning her future destinies.

"No father, no mother! Poor child! And so well-bred; so distinguée. See how daintily she eats her cake."

"What is your name, my little one?" suddenly asked the younger.

"Lucie Lemeunier, madame."

The duchess looked with a deprecating smile at her friend. "I had

almost dreamed, ma tante, that she must be noble; and even now, do not her features recall some that we see every day?"

Madame de Maintenon reflected with a kindly smile, and then asked, "Do you know your mother's maiden name, my child?"

"Marie de Ste. Barbe, madame."

"De Ste. Barbe!" cried both, in deep excitement. "Has the Duke de Ste. Barbe permitted that a member of his family should die in want, and leave an orphan child in such distress?" cried the young duchess.

"He is an inexorable man," replied the other.

"But we will protect this poor child; she shall not die of hunger."

"I will take her to St. Cyr,"* replied the elder lady. "She shall find an asylum there from a cold and heartless world. Will you come with me, little one, and learn to be a lady such as your mother would have desired to see you?"

The little Lucie looked up with the utmost confidence into the grave, sweet face above her.

"I will go with you, madame, wherever you are good enough to take me," she said; and so the compact was made.

* * * * *

Seven years had passed. In a large hall which it was easy to see was used for scholastic purposes, but now decorated with fresh flowers, garlands, and banners, sat the greatest monarch of his time—his courtiers would have said of any time. The gracious dignity of Louis Quatorze was never more perfect, never more urbane than now. The powder from his heavy curling wig made a little snow-fall on his velvet shoulders; the diamonds on his breast were as a sparkle of falling waters. Beside him sat Madame de Maintenon, with a trifle more severity on her countenance, a few more wrinkles, yet a careful smile of mingled tenderness and reverence as she addressed the king, and a smile more bright and less careful as she looked at the scene before her.

On a raised platform a drama was being enacted. The actors were young girls, clad in a prim and simple dress of brown, with a quaint high cap of muslin, bound with a blue ribbon. In the midst stood one taller than the rest, and with a queenly grace she had spoken:

> "Mes filles, chantez-vous quelqu'un de ces cantiques
> Où vos voix si souvent, se mêlant à mes pleurs,
> De la triste Sion célèbrent les malheurs."

It was the dolorous Queen Esther who was commanding her young companions to sing her one of the songs of Zion.

In response, a maiden came forward, the song of Zion sounding perhaps rather strangely from under that tall prim cap. But the sweet

* The House of St. Cyr, near Versailles, was founded by Madame de Maintenon, as a school for poor girls of good birth. They were called "Les Dames de St. Cyr."

young face, now for the first time brought into the full light, was so fresh, pure, and charming, that it elicited a word of approbation from the great Louis himself, never blind to female beauty; and in the row of courtiers behind him, this became, with the vociferous echo of adulation, a loud hum of applause. For a moment, a tremor and a blush choked the voice of the young actress; but a soft ripple of encouragement, or some better feeling, restored her calmness, and in another moment there arose, in a clear soprano, that beautiful verse in which the young Jewess sings alone the lament over Zion abased unto the dust.

The play was Racine's immortal "Esther," written for "Les Dames de St. Cyr," the youthful protégées of the great and wise, and, let us believe, the *good* Madame de Maintenon. The poet was there, listening with an apparent indifference to the verse, and a complete absorption in the acting; the great of the land were there, to do honour to the benevolence of her who was their queen in all but name. On one of these, the eye of that remarkable woman suddenly rested when the young girl's song began. She marked his start, his heightened colour, the rapid passage of his hand across his eyes. The play went on, but his embarrassment continued; and when again that sweet voice had arisen and ceased, the white, firm hand of Madame de Maintenon beckoned him to her side. He was a stern man, prematurely aged; and in spite of the elegant dissimulation of that most polished court, he could not entirely control his features as she said to him with a certain meaning in her clear, smooth tones:

"You appear touched by the charms of our young chorister, Monsieur le Duc. Does her face awaken any remembrance? Her name is Lucie Lemeunier. I keep her here until she shall be claimed by those who have a better right to the honour and happiness of maintaining her."

The duke murmured some indistinct reply. In a lower and more significant tone, Madame de Maintenon continued: "Her mother died in poverty, and the child might have died of hunger but for the Princess Marie Amélie and my poor self."

The Duke de Ste. Barbe fell back with a low bow into the little crowd of courtiers behind the royal chair. He was a childless man, and often in his loneliness the thought of his beautiful sister, and the child whom he had never seen, had haunted him.

The play was ended. With a profound and ineffable joy, due only to the approbation of One who is the King of kings, the young girls had received the praises of the monarch; great in the eyes of men: great or little in the eyes of the ever-watching angels? No one asked the question.

"Madame, they have played admirably," said one noble lord to her who was the mainspring of it all.

"So admirably, my lord," she replied (and was there not in her tone one faint touch of the acerbity of a woman losing her bloom before the aspect of so much youthful loveliness?)—"so admirably that they shall never play again."

At this moment, with a deep bow and a countenance strongly moved, the Duke de Ste. Barbe again addressed her.

"Madame," said he, in an agitated voice, "you know all. If you consent, I will accept from your hands the last trust of my poor unhappy sister."

"Shall I have cause to regret it, sir, if I let her leave my quiet home?" asked Madame de Maintenon, her searching look fixed keenly on him.

"Never, madame; rely upon my honour: her resemblance to my sister when in her greatest beauty has touched my heart profoundly."

"I will consult His Majesty," she responded, the severity breaking up into a genial smile. She turned, and, in a low voice, explained the whole to Louis.

It was a position dear to a Frenchman's heart: the poetic drama was to be crowned with one of prose. No English words can paint the ineffable French grace of that most graceful and dignified, alas! most hollow court, as the young Lucie was called forward from her sisters, to receive a word of benevolence from the king, and, by her protectress, to be placed in the arms of the relative who had left her mother to die in poverty.

We may ask, was Lucie happier in the splendour of a ducal palace than in the sequestered tranquillity of St. Cyr? Well, she had learned in that calm retreat to be modest and pious, and to rest on a stay which will support us alike in a cottage or a palace; and so we may safely leave her, not in the hands of a vacillating and stern relative, but in those of One who never faileth nor forsaketh those who trust in Him.

PARKWATER.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER V.

CAPTAIN DEVEREUX.

THERE were signs one evening of a reception at Parkwater. Rooms were lighted, and carriages whirled up, bringing guests. Not many guests, for the locality did not produce them, and they mostly had to come from a distance. Still, when all were assembled, what with old and young, it was a goodly show. Rose was nine years old that day, and they were keeping her birthday: children and parents were equally welcome.

The governess's eyes and senses were dazzled. On this occasion she made one with the rest. Inordinately alive to the value of rank, to the pomp and pride of courtly life, the result chiefly of her childhood's researches in the Caterpillar pages, her expectations had been raised to an extraordinary pitch when about to enter the Earl of Tennygal's family. Once there, she had found herself immeasurably disappointed. In all, save the titles, it might have been taken for a private gentleman's household. Miss May had anticipated something far more grand; though precisely what, she could not herself have stated: whether the carpets were to be of cloth of gold, or the every-day dinner-plates of silver. But, on certain occasions, none knew better how to hold their rank, and to display its appurtenances, than Lord and Lady Tennygal: this was one, and Sophia May, who had never before witnessed the social unions of courtly life, forgot that she was only a subordinate, and thought herself in the seventh heaven. She was standing looking at the quadrille in the children's room, when Captain Devereux approached her.

"Where is it that you hide yourself, Miss May?" he demanded, his voice drowned by the music. "I have been in this house going on for three weeks, and have hardly met with you as many times. It would have been like three months had you not been in it."

The blush of gratified vanity rose to Sophia May's face. Captain Devereux, brother to a countess, and son to the Right Honourable Sir Archibald Devereux, her Majesty's Home Secretary, bore to her mind an exalted charm. And besides that, in the very few meetings they had held, she had felt herself irresistibly attracted to him. Her

heart had already learned to flutter for him as it had never fluttered for Frederick Lyvett.

During this stay of Captain Devereux, the children were much in their own apartments; except on Sundays they did not dine at the luncheon-table. He was so loose in his ideas, and sometimes also in his expressions, that Lord and Lady Tennygal kept their little girls out of his society as much as they could. As a matter of course this also kept the governess from it. But they had met oftener than "three times:" that was, so to say, a figure of speech.

"What do you suppose makes me linger here, in this remote bog-hole of a sister-kingdom, and in this precious house of it, ever in an uproar with children?" continued the Captain.

"I do not know," answered Miss May, blushing deeper and deeper.

Captain Devereux thought he had never seen a more lovely face than that one with the blush upon it, and his eyes said it so plainly that the governess cast down hers.

"Then you ought to know. It is *you*. And if you had only listened to what I said the other day, instead of darting away, you would have known it then." He spoke in that insinuating tone which none knew how to assume better than Theodore Devereux. It had won its way to many a more experienced head and heart than poor Sophia May's.

"I am sorry if you thought me rude," she replied. "Lady Rose was with me, and she is——"

"A quick genius," he interrupted, "and might carry tales. Was that what you were about to say? Quickness runs in the Devereux family. I am wanted in Scotland, where I made an engagement to go shooting; I am wanted at Sir Archibald's; I am wanted in fifty places; and I cannot tear myself away from the spot. You alone are keeping me here."

Captain Devereux knew he had never told a greater untruth in his life; and he knew, also, that if he could have got away, Miss May and her charms, ten times magnified, would not have kept him for a single moment. He went on improving upon his assertion; Sophia's heart fluttering more and more with every word, and believing it religiously.

"And I am a fool for my pains: for I cannot afford yet to take a Mrs. Devereux. What's the matter?"

She had turned aside and appeared to be busy, tying the sash of a little girl. Captain Devereux looked round, and saw Lady Tennygal; who was beckoning to him from the door of the room.

"I have been searching for you," she began: "you must ask Harriet Ord for the next quadrille. You have neglected her all the evening."

"Harriet Ord's a scarecrow."

"It is a pity you think so, Theodore," was the answer. "I believe, if you chose to ask her, you might have her for your wife to-morrow. I am sure she likes you. And she is so amiable, and ——"

"Oh, I knew long ago I might have her for the asking," carelessly replied Captain Devereux, "but I shall not try *that* on till everything else has failed. When I am so deep in the well, that I can sink no lower, I may go to her and her eighty thousand pounds to draw me up."

"Theodore, how can you speak so?" asked his sister indignantly. "Is she worth no more to you than that?"

"Not at present," was the cool rejoinder. "As to her amiability—cela va sans dire. It's the best part about her."

"Well, come and dance with her now."

Captain Devereux followed his sister, with a wry face: but, once in the society of Lady Harriet Ord, he became all smiling attention. Slightingly as he had spoken of her to the Countess, there was in his heart a latent conviction that he should sometime be thankful to win her and her coveted money, and he would not mar his chance. In earlier days, years ago now, they had been thrown a good deal together. Captain Devereux put forth some of his blandishments, just to pass the time away, and had gained her heart. He knew he gained it—and then, like the knight in the once popular song, he rode away. Lady Harriet was not handsome; in fact, she was rather remarkably plain; but she was sweet-tempered and of sterling worth. Heaven help her, said the world, if she linked herself to that Theodore Devereux! Lord Tennygal said it: but Bessie, blinded by sisterly affection, thought it would be all that was wanted to reform her brother. She only knew of a few of his lighter failings.

"I have something of import to say to you," spoke Captain Devereux, seeking out Sophia when he quitted Lady Harriet. "Can you contrive to give me a few minutes' interview to-morrow?—or on any subsequent day?"

"Were it anything very particular," she began, with her blue eyes cast unconsciously down—"but still, it could not be. I do not see that it could. I am in the schoolroom all day, and the young ladies are with me."

"Provoking little reptiles!" he ejaculated. "Do you never go out, Miss May?"

"Not often, without them."

"Well, I must see you. Look here: the day after to-morrow will be Sunday. You can stay at home from church."

"But I—I shall have no plea for staying at home, Captain Devereux," she urged. "What would Lady Tennygal think?"

"Let her think what she likes. I suppose you have a headache sometimes? You can have one then. No doubt you *will*, after this dissipation."

Strange to say, on the following Sunday, Miss May's head did ache. It was so painful as to preclude her going out; and an intimation to that

effect was conveyed to the sympathising Lady Tennygal, who carried her some aromatic vinegar with her own hands.

When the family were departing for church, the Countess knocked at the door of her brother's apartments, which were on the same floor as her own. "Theodore," she called out, "do come to church with us for once."

"Much obliged for the invitation," he answered, from within. "I shan't be up till you are back again. You and Tennygal can pray for me, you know." Yet Captain Devereux was up then: and his sister, with a sigh at his mocking tone, joined her husband and children.

Surely Sophia May's better angel was away that day! Otherwise she never would have allowed the clandestine interview. It was sufficiently harmless in itself, but it laid the foundation for much deception, that was destined in time to bring forth terrible fruit.

She sat in her sitting-room, Lady Tennygal's vinaigrette on the table by her side, and her handkerchief saturated with eau de cologne in her hand. Captain Devereux stood by the open window, listening to her complaints of the pain her head gave her, and speculating within himself upon whether it ached or not.

After all, he wanted nothing particular. Nothing but to pass an idle hour with her and assure her that he cared for nobody but her: that he never had cared for anybody else in the world. The hour passed very quickly. From his post at the window he soon saw Lord and Lady Tennygal approaching in the distance, on their way from church, with their children and servants. Captain Devereux tore himself away from Miss May's fascinating presence, as he styled it, and withdrew to his own room, lingering yet a moment to reiterate his affection for her, and to assert that, now it had set in, it would last for ever.

Sophia believed him all too readily. "He sighed, he vowed, and she believed him," runs the old song, or to that effect. But the same old song says, "When men flatter, sigh, and languish, think them false—I found them so."

Sophia listened, and believed; her heart beating, her pulses thrilling; her whole being filled with one intense passionate love for Theodore Devereux. For that day, at least, she was sure of seeing him again, for they would presently meet at the dining-room luncheon; and the bliss the thought brought to her was unspeakable. After to-day—well, Captain Devereux had told her that she must contrive to meet him, or else he should die: he would snatch a convenient moment to wait upon her in the schoolroom, and she must take a run in the grounds occasionally without those little brats. Sophia tacitly acquiesced. She had no thought of harm in doing so, or that harm would come of it. The only thing presenting itself to her mind was the necessity of concealing it from the knowledge of Lord and Lady Tennygal. They would be sure not to approve of it.

And so, with her eyes open, Sophia May entered voluntarily on a course of deception, and met Captain Devereux when circumstances permitted. It was a very innocent beginning—as *she* looked upon it; but it was destined to lead to a most sad and distressing ending. And in the depth of her after despair, she could not recal one single point of self-excuse or consolation, for it was but her own self-sophistry that had misled her, and her misplaced faith in Captain Devereux. At present all seemed pleasant and easy and innocent; these first links of the chain were so light and specious—they generally are so—that she felt them not; or dreamt that it would coil and coil gradually around her until its later links became as desperate weights of iron, that would crush her to death, or worse than death, in their folds.

It is not a grateful task to record these histories; and this—it has been already said—is a true one. At the best, the tale was but the old tale: one that has been enacted over and over again, and will be until time shall cease. A false man and a credulous woman: a wedding promised for "to-morrow," and the to-morrow never came. It is well, oh reader, to tell these stories in the twilight, when the atmosphere is dim, and the voice is lowered to a whisper, and the faces opposite to ours are but imperfectly seen. The world teems with such histories: and though we may profess to ignore them, and shut our eyes to them, there they are nevertheless: and perhaps it is best that some one of them more notable than the rest in its sorrow, or disastrous in its results, may from time to time be recorded, if only in the light of a warning.

But in the twilight: in the twilight.

CHAPTER VI.

SUSPICION.

THE weeks and the months went on. Captain Devereux was still an inmate of Parkwater. He could not get away from it. No slave ever longed for emancipation more intensely than he longed to escape and be in the world again; but he dared not venture to go. Sir Archibald Devereux remained obdurate: one or two dangerous liabilities he did settle; but he would do no more for his hopeful son.

That Miss May's education was superficial and her cultivation entirely unsuited to the charge she had undertaken, would, it is probable, have been long ago discovered, but that chance removed from her the supervision of Lady Tennygal.

An illness that proved to be a lingering one attacked Lady Tennygal in autumn, and confined her for some months to her room. Not until February did she begin to get about again. All this while yet had

Captain Devereux been a fixture in the house, keeping his locality quiet, yawning through the dull, dark days and bemoaning his hard fate at being condemned to vegetate in Ireland, where no diversion of any kind was to be had, save that arising from his snatched conversations with the governess. And of those conversations he had grown tired now, sick to death.

Once in a way, he would ride over to Mrs. Barry's, the aunt of Lady Harriet Ord. Her place was some ten miles distant. There he would spend a few hours in her company and Lady Harriet's, suppressing his weariness as he best could. But when the winter had given place to the early days of spring; when the hedges were beginning to shoot forth their green, and the glad birds to sing, Captain Devereux resolved on a desperate step; for indeed it did seem to him that without aid from some source, he should be condemned to this frightful state of existence all his days.

"I have done it at last," he gloomily said one morning at breakfast, soon after his sister appeared amongst them again.

"What have you done?" inquired Lord Tennygal.

"Gone and sold myself. Bones, body, and flesh. To Harriet Ord."

"You don't mean that you are going to marry her?" exclaimed the Countess.

"It's nothing less," said Captain Devereux. "I could not go on in this mummying way any longer: and one might as well be an embalmed mummy as have one's legs and wings tied as mine have been lately. I should have hung myself, or something equivalent, had it lasted another month. So yesterday, when I was over there, I told her she might take me if she liked; and she snapped at it."

"It is the very best thing you ever did," said Lord Tennygal, warmly. "If you choose, you may now become a decent member of society; Harriet will make you one."

"She ought to make me something—sacrificing myself for her!"

"Where is the sacrifice?"

"Sacrifice! She's forty."

"Nonsense! You are six-and-thirty, Tody."

"If you look to the peerage, you will see that Harriet is eight-and-thirty," interposed Lady Tennygal. "Two years are not so great a difference, my fastidious brother."

"Yes, they are, when they're on the wrong side. Besides, look at her Chinese eyes, and African mouth!"

"For shame, Theodore!" interposed his sister warmly. "She has neither the one nor the other."

"*Can* you call her a beauty?"

"You are no Adonis, Tod," laughed the Earl.

"What has that to do with it?" was the ex-Captain's growling answer. "The uglier a man is, the more the women like him."

"Theodore," said his sister gravely, "you have been behaving ill to Harriet Ord for this many a year past, unless you have all along intended to marry her. You have paid her attention: you have kept, I am certain, other suitors away from her: this is the only fit termination, and for yourself it is a most fortunate one. Were I you, I should make the best of it instead of the worst."

"And a very good 'best' you may make of it," added the Earl. "If Lady Harriet has not beauty, she has money and good temper: somebody, whom I know, is deficient in both."

"It is to be hoped her temper is good," snapped Captain Devereux. "She will find it put to the test."

Lord Tennygal glanced at him a keen glance, and spoke in a serious tone.

"Devereux, mark me: when a man marries, he had better resolve not to try his wife's temper, for his own sake as well as for hers. If you cannot bring yourself to endeavour to make Harriet happy, it is your duty not to marry her."

"What a row about nothing!" answered Captain Devereux, as he rose from the breakfast-table. "I am not going to beat her."

Lord Tennygal drew in his lips. But for his wife's presence he would have spoken out his indignation.

"By the way," said Captain Devereux, halting with the door-handle in his hand. "Be so good as keep what I have told you to yourselves. It is not to be announced yet. There are reasons against it."

"Your debts, I suppose," replied his sister.

"So just keep it dark, both of you," concluded the Captain, not giving her a direct answer.

On the following day, the Earl departed from Parkwater. Business called him to London. His wife and family would remain where they were until Easter, when he was to return for them.

And thus a short while again passed on; Captain Devereux paying visits to Mrs. Barry's two or three times a week, by way of courting Lady Harriet.

It wanted about a fortnight to Easter, when there stood one day in a somewhat remote part of the park, a lady and gentleman, in conversation so earnest that the approach of a carriage across the green sward was unnoticed. As it came upon them, however, the gentleman started, and took off his hat in some confusion. The lady walked away.

The carriage contained Harriet Ord and Mrs. Barry. Mrs. Barry only had noticed the talkers. "That looked like the governess," was her thought. "How earnestly she was talking with Captain Devereux! —and how pale she looked!"

Captain Devereux, on his part, gazed with amazement after the carriage; for it not only bore the ladies, but some luggage also, as if they had came to make a stay."

"She has never been asking *them!*" was his muttered exclamation as he hastened to the house.

The ladies, he heard, were in their dressing-rooms: he supposed Lady Tennygal might be in hers. There he found her, with her two eldest children.

"What are Harriet Ord and her aunt here to-day for?" he asked.

"Ah!" said the Countess, clapping her hands, "I knew I should give you a surprise. I begged Harriet not to tell you. I have invited them to stay with us until we leave for London."

"You have a curious way of doing things, Lady Tennygal," was his ungracious remark, as he turned on his heel.

"Theodore, stop a minute! Have you been in the park?"

"What if I have?"

"Did you happen to meet Miss May? It is the children's hour for walking, but Laura says she went out without them. I do not understand it. Did you see anything of her?"

He did not give a flat denial, for Mrs. Barry could have contradicted him. Collecting his wits, he answered coolly.

"Miss May? Yes, I saw her sitting down near the trees by the cross-cut. She looked ill. I went up and inquired if I could do anything for her, but she declined my services, and marched away. It was just as Lady Harriet's carriage drove by."

"I think she is ill," said Laura; "she looked quite white all study-time; but she did not tell me. When I asked her what was the matter, she told me to mind my lessons."

"Poor thing!" exclaimed Lady Tennygal. "Perhaps she has one of her bad headaches to-day."

Now the substance of this conversation with her brother was innocently repeated by the Countess in Mrs. Barry's dressing-room when she ran in to say that Theodore knew of their arrival. It aroused some doubt—or suspicion—in Mrs. Barry's mind. For she felt certain from the manner of both Captain Devereux and the governess that it was not a mere inquiry after health which had been passing between them. Why then should Captain Devereux say to his sister that it was?

"There's something behind this," thought Mrs. Barry. "I will watch a little. For Harriet's sake I will—for oh! I wish she would break with him. She is blindly infatuated with Tody Devereux: but I know he is a bad man, and it will be a bad day's work for her if she marries him."

Mrs. Barry was as good as her word, and watched. It may be said that she was urged on by self-interest: for Lady Harriet Ord's proposed marriage threatened her with the loss of a good portion of her income. But she was besides anxiously uncertain in regard to Harriet's future happiness.

For several days she saw nothing: and the matter had nearly passed from her mind; when one evening, soon after the ladies left the

dining-room, Mrs. Barry was passing a staircase-window, and caught sight of Captain Devereux, walking quickly towards a grove of trees on this side the park. Why had he left the dining-room?—he who was so fond of his wine?

"My dear," she whispered to little Rose, when she went back to the drawing-room, "where's your governess this evening?"

"Oh, she is in the study."

"I thought she was to have come down with you and Laura."

"Mamma did ask her, but she said she had our exercises to correct."

Not another word said Mrs. Barry. She glided out, saw that Miss May was not in the study, put on a cloak, covering her head with its hood, like a true Irishwoman, and she also went out into the dusk of the evening. They were walking just where she expected to find them, in the sheltered path: Captain Devereux and the governess. Mrs. Barry halted amid the big trunks of the budding trees.

"Well, don't you do anything so hazardous again," he was saying, in a reproving tone, and Mrs. Barry caught the words distinctly. "Sending a peremptory note to me in the dining-room that I must come out to you here that instant! Suppose it had fallen into the hands of Lady Tennygal! She had not quitted the room five minutes."

"I wish it had," was Miss May's answer, delivered in a passionate tone. "If what I have heard to-day be true, I wish it had."

"Now, Sophia, don't give way to temper. We can both do that, on occasion, as you and I know, but this must not be one. Just calm yourself, and tell me what you are complaining of."

"I want to know the truth."

"What about?"

"Have you proposed to Lady Harriet Ord?"

"What in the name of wonder put such a thing as that in your head?" he asked, in a voice teeming with astonishment; and little Mrs. Barry leaned forward, and put her sharp *retroussé* nose between the trunks of two proximate trees, and brought her sight to bear upon the parties. He was standing with his hands in his pockets, a slouching, favourite mode of his; and the poor young governess, as Mrs. Barry could not help thinking her, was gazing at him with her blue, inquiring eyes starting from their pale lids, as if she would read into his very soul.

"One of the little girls said to-day in the schoolroom that Lady Harriet was to be her aunt—your wife," she slowly said, with a catching up of the sobbing breath.

"And you believed it! and must make all this fuss and haste to ask me!" he rejoined, no doubt giving a word in his heart to his sister—for it must have leaked out through some imprudence of hers. "As if you could not have waited a proper opportunity."

"*Is it so?*"

"No, it is not. Harriet Ord would like to jump into my arms; and

if I tacitly allow her and others to think that it is within the range of possibility I may some time let her take the leap, why do I do it? And these are the sort of thanks I get!"

"The two-faced, diabolical wolf in sheep's clothing!" heartily uttered Mrs. Barry, from between the trees. "Oh, if Harriet were but here!"

"If they told me to my face I was going to marry her or any other woman, I should not contradict them," he went on. "A nice taste a man must have to marry Harriet Ord! If I lie passive under the imputation, it is for your sake."

"Were I sure you are deceiving me—that your attentions to Lady Harriet are real, I would—I would ——"

"You would what? Let us hear."

"I would tell all to Lord and Lady Tennygal," she answered, bursting into tears. "I would tell Lady Harriet that she must not be your wife, for that you are under a solemn promise to marry no one but me. I would tell them that the banns for our marriage ——"

"Sophy, you'd do nothing of the sort," he interrupted: "you are no simpleton."

"If it came to such a pass as that ——"

"But it is not coming to it. Lady Tennygal and Mrs. Barry, and all the lot of them—she herself included, possibly—are deluding themselves into the hope that I shall have the old Chinese image; but don't you put yourself into a fantigue over the matter, whatever you may hear. Time enough to call out when you are hurt."

He walked away. Mrs. Barry, who did not choose to leave her hiding-place till both had disappeared, peeped at the governess. Miss May had seated herself in the rude garden-chair; her eyes were strained on vacancy, seeing nothing, and her whole attitude bespoke pain and misery. Suddenly her mood changed: and a frightful expression of anger arose to her face, which Mrs. Barry could only liken to a demon at the play.

Of course there was a dreadful hubbub; for Mrs. Barry, though she waited till the next day, did not bring her tale out so cautiously as she might have done. Accusings, and denials, and counter-accusings, and reproaches, and oaths: the latter, of course, from the angry Captain Devereux.

Mrs. Barry persisted in her story, and Captain Devereux persisted in his—which was, that Mrs. Barry must have dropped asleep after dinner and dreamt it. In this he was supported by Miss May: she affirmed that she had been correcting exercises in the study at the hour mentioned: had never quitted it; and he said he had never stirred out of the dining-room. Poor Mrs. Barry was completely dumfounded; especially when Lady Harriet Ord expressed her opinion in favour of the dream.

CHAPTER VII.

SOPHIA'S DESOLATION.

PASSION-WEEK arrived, and Lord Tennygal with it. Very much surprised, was he, to find the house in this uncomfortable and undecided state, one party in it mutually accusing the other.

He listened, in his calm, matter-of-fact way, to the two sides of the case. His wife, when they were alone, actually shed tears; the affair, she told him, had so worried her, between her anxiety to do what was right, and her fear to do what was wrong, that she felt nearly as ill as ever. Lord Tennygal took an opportunity of speaking to his brother-in-law.

"Devereux," he said, "this is very bad. Lady Tennygal's governess ought to have commanded your respect. Were it not for the dangerous position your affairs are in, you should not remain in this house another hour."

"There's nothing wrong," answered Captain Devereux, "nothing at all; it is a delusion altogether. That old mischief-making cat fell asleep in her room after dinner and must have had a dream ——"

"Psha, man!" interrupted Lord Tennygal, "don't attempt to palm off your dreams upon me. Mrs. Barry heard Miss May say you could not marry Lady Harriet, because you were under a solemn engagement to marry *her*. She said something about *banns*. If ——"

"Mrs. Barry did not hear her, then. She's a ——"

"Hear me out, Devereux, if you please. If you have been gaining Miss May's affections, under the promise of marriage, you are bound in honour to marry her, although she is but a governess. If, on the other hand, you have in any way compromised the poor girl, I will never forgive it, and I hope Lady Harriet will not. But whatever the truth is, I must be made acquainted with it, that I may know how to act."

"I have given my word once," sullenly replied Captain Devereux; "I don't see the use of repeating it ten times over. I deny it altogether; and I say that Mrs. Barry either invented or dreamt it."

"You persist in this?—to me?"

"I do. And to everybody else."

"Then I must take another course."

"Look here, Tennygal. Mrs. Barry has been against my marriage with Harriet from the first; and I don't believe she'd stand at any invention to put it aside. If she didn't dream the thing, she invented it. What good would it do me, do you suppose, to talk or walk with Miss May?"

"This is all you have to say to me upon the point, Devereux?"

"Every word."

Lord Tennygal next proceeded to hold an interview with Miss May. He spoke very kindly and considerately to her; but he begged her to confide in him, to let him know the truth, promising that if she did he would be a friend to her, whatever that truth might be. Miss May, however, was just as impervious as the ex-Captain. She persisted, as he did, that Mrs. Barry must have invented the story or dreamt it: and Lord Tennygal was puzzled.

The Earl was a clear-sighted man, reading people more truly than his wife did; and in the manner of both Miss May and the Captain there was something he did not like—a want of sincerity.

He had never truly liked Miss May as governess to his children: and he now determined that she should not remain with them. But there was a difference between turning a young lady from his house summarily, and giving her due warning. Which course, he wondered, would the real facts, that he could not come at, justify? Like his wife, he only desired to act fairly by her and by themselves. If it were but a dream, for instance, of Mrs. Barry's, they would keep Miss May until she got another situation and help her to get one: if it were not a dream, but fact, why that was another thing. He must try and discover daylight for himself, since nobody seemed able to throw it upon him.

"Who were Miss May's references, Bessie?" asked Lord Tennygal, proceeding to his wife's room.

She had to look to Lady Langton's letters before she could answer: and found that Lady Langton spoke of a Mrs. Penryn, as having written in her favour: but who Mrs. Penryn was Lady Langton did not state.

"And probably did not know," observed Lord Tennygal. "She is the laziest woman in the world, is Lady Langton: just the one to be imposed upon with her eyes open."

"There was another recommendation from some solicitors; they wrote most strongly in her favour, Lady Langton said. They were friends of Miss May's late father, I remember; partners, or something of that. Miss May was staying with them at the time."

"Yes; let me see—what was the firm? Quite a first-class one, I know."

The Countess ran her eyes over Lady Langton's letters. "Here it is: 'Lyvett, Castlerosse, and Lyvett.'"

"I shall write to them, Bessie. Do you say Miss May's late father was their partner?"

"I am not sure about that; he was a solicitor, and they knew him well. I think I had better write to Lady Langton, Frank."

"Do so," said the Earl. And the two letters, one to her ladyship, the other to Lyvett, Castlerosse, and Lyvett, were despatched on that same day.

Lady Langton received her letter, and read it with some concern.

She was an extremely indolent woman in general, but she did not like the thought of having placed a governess with Lady Tennygal about whom some doubt had arisen; neither did she like to think she had been herself deceived.

For once she bestirred herself; driving first of all to the address that had been given her as Mrs. Penryn's. But of Mrs. Penryn she could obtain no tidings whatever. Other people lived in the house now (which proved to be a lodging-house, sufficiently respectable), and they had never heard Mrs. Penryn's name. She might have had the drawing-room apartments in the last tenant's time, they said; and that was all Lady Langton could learn.

Her doubts growing greater, herself more angry, she ordered her carriage down to Lyvett, Castlerosse, and Lyvett's, and obtained an interview with Mr. Lyvett himself.

"You wrote, unasked, and recommended Miss May to me," urged Lady Langton wrathfully. Conscious that her own carelessness was to blame, she naturally wished to find somebody else to throw it upon.

"We never wrote at all to you, madam," coldly replied Mr. Lyvett, who was not accustomed to be spoken to in this tone, even by peeresses. "And so we are about to inform Lord Tennygal, from whom we have received a communication."

"If *you* did not write to me, some one of your firm must have written."

"Your ladyship is altogether mistaken."

"But the letters to Miss May were addressed here, to your care," next urged Lady Langton.

"Certainly not, so far as we are aware," rejoined Mr. Lyvett. "But May, her father, who was formerly our porter, may have had letters left here for him without our knowledge."

"Could that fact be ascertained?"

Mr. Lyvett rang his bell. Upon inquiry, it proved that the postman had received instructions to deliver all such letters into the hands of a Miss Jenkins next door: who had forwarded them to the Mays.

Lady Langton went home in a fury. Without delay she wrote to the Countess of Tennygal, candidly informing her that Miss May was a dreadful impostor, and had imposed upon her by false pretences.

Mr. Lyvett wrote also to the Earl. His letter ran as follows:—

"My Lord,—In reply to the communication with which you have favoured us, we beg to acquaint your lordship that we know nothing of the matter you allude to. We never had a 'partner' or a 'friend' of the name of May. Until recently, a man of that name lived at our offices as porter, but we found cause to discharge him. This occurred last July, and we know nothing of his movements since that period. May had a daughter: and we deem it not impossible that she may be

the individual who has imposed upon your lordship by a false recommendation in our name. She was educated above her station, and her Christian name is Sophia.

"We have the honour to be, my lord,

"Your lordship's obedient servants,

"LYVETT, CASTLEROSSE, AND LYVETT.

"The Right Honourable the Earl of Tennygal."

Both these communications reached Parkwater by the same post. Lord Tennygal read Mr. Lyvett's letter and threw it into his wife's lap.

"Take better care in future, Bessie," was all he said. "Miss May must leave to-day."

So the whole plot was discovered; and there remained not a shadow of doubt that Miss May, or her friends for her, had cleverly furnished her own letters of reference.

The Countess of Tennygal was in a state of consternation. Easy-natured as she was, her indignation was aroused now. She would not see the governess, but deputed her housekeeper to pay and discharge her. "I could not have believed such a thing possible," she exclaimed. "I have heard of servants obtaining places under false pretences, but for a governess to do so seems incredible."

Lord Tennygal smiled a half smile: perhaps at his wife's want of knowledge of the world. "Many a governess has done it ere this," he said, "and many will do it again."

"But they can have no principle."

"That's another thing."

Lord Tennygal was not far wrong. There are governesses in families, even now, who have entered them under auspices as false as those by which Miss May obtained admittance to his.

"But, Frank," resumed Lady Tennygal, her kinder nature reasserting its sway, "this does not prove that Miss May and Tody have been talking and walking together."

"Of course, it does not *prove* it," returned the Earl, with rather a doubtful stress upon the word. "No: and we will give her the benefit of the doubt, Bessie. I think I will see her myself."

"Oh, Frank, if you would! It was a very, very wrong thing to do; but I cannot help being sorry for her. Perhaps she had no friend in the world to help her to a situation."

"I will hear no justification of her on that score, Bessie," rather sternly spoke Lord Tennygal.

He saw Miss May; quietly told her of his application to Mr. Lyvett, and its result, and that she must in consequence leave Parkwater as soon as she could conveniently get her things packed—that day if possible. Not a word did he say as to the other matter: and Miss May thoroughly understood that the cause he spoke of was truly

the cause of her dismissal. The circumstances would of course have justified him in paying her only to that period; but Lord Tennygal, generous at heart, handed her a cheque for the running quarter—which was but just entered upon.

Sophia received it very meekly. She begged of Lord Tennygal, the scalding tears standing in her blue eyes, not to think of her more hardly than he could help. It was a friend of hers who had done it all, not herself: and her only hope now was that she should yet get on in the world so as to have no need to trouble friends.

"I'm sure I hope you will," said his lordship heartily. "With regard to references, I fear—I fear Lady Tennygal——"

"I shall not require references, my lord," interrupted Sophia. "It is not my intention to continue to be a governess."

"Oh, very well," said he. "That's all right, then."

He wished her a civil good-bye, even shaking hands with her; for he was a man who could not be discourteous to anyone. But Sophia keenly felt the fact that she did not see Lady Tennygal.

Captain Devereux, contriving to meet her in one of the passages, snatched a parting word. "You will go straight to London, Sophy——"

"No," she interrupted, "I shall go to Liverpool. And the very day you join me there, our marriage can take place. Which church is it that the banns ——"

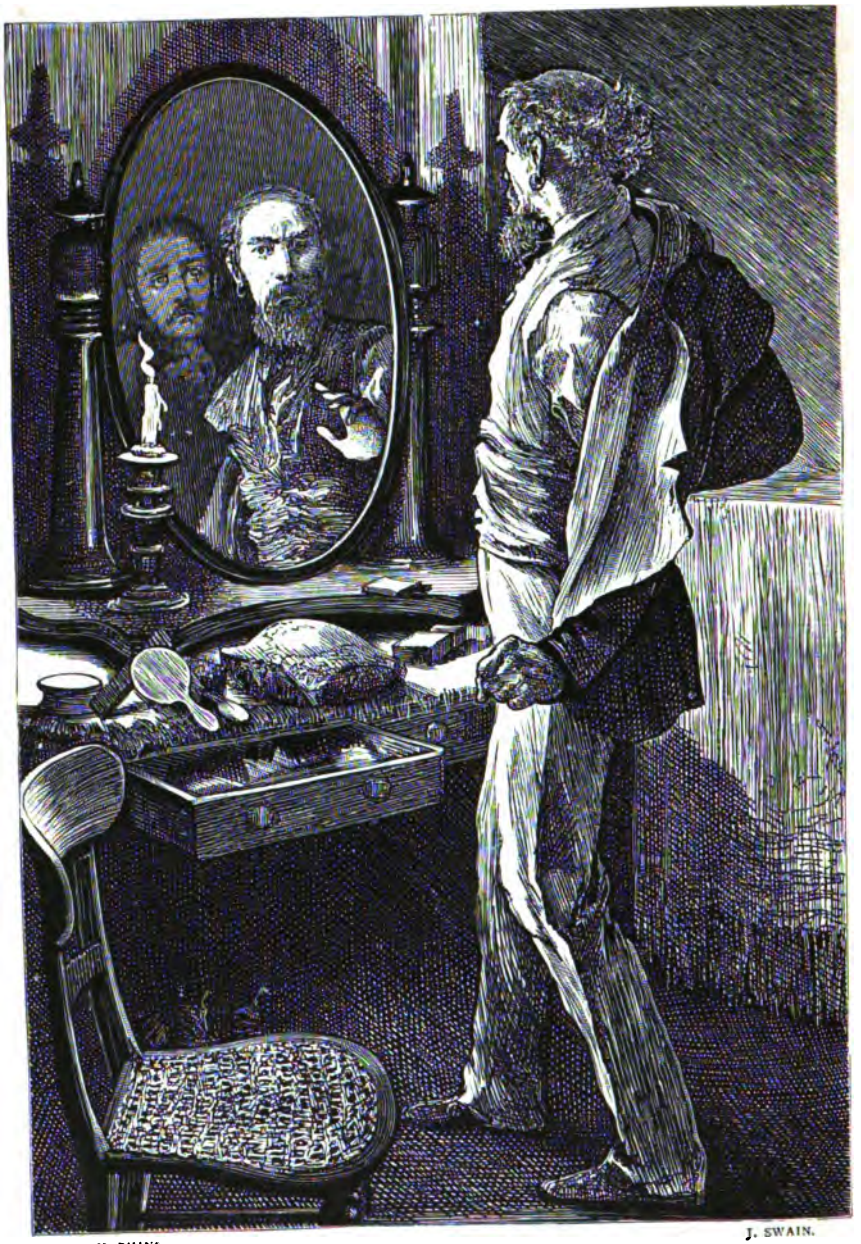
"Hush! here come your pupils. Good-bye, Sophia. Send me your address."

So that was over. And Miss May took her last farewell of Parkwater.

But Captain Devereux never joined her. He wrote letters to her instead. They were not so full of sweet phrases as they might have been; but they were full of pitiful bemoanings touching his hard fate, in being obliged to hide his head in that "fearful bog-hole," until his affairs could be so far settled that he might venture out of it, and into the sunny English world. Sophia May believed it all, was partially pacified and most intensely miserable.

Captain Devereux decidedly came off the best. He not only imposed his idle tales upon her, but he succeeded in persuading another credulous heart that he was not a wolf in sheep's clothing, but a falsely-accused, harmless lamb, the victim of old ladies' after-dinner dreams. And in less than a month after Easter the public papers recorded the marriage of Theodore Hugh Devereux, third son of the Right Honourable Sir Archibald Devereux, with the Lady Harriet Ord.

(*To be continued.*)



A. HOPKINS. J. SWAIN.

THE FACE IN THE GLASS.

THE ARGOSY.

APRIL, 1875.

A SECRET OF THE SEA.

By the Author of "In the Dead of Night."

CHAPTER X.

IN HARLEY STREET.

BY the end of the first week in February Sir Thomas Dudgeon and his family were comfortably settled in Harley Street.

Sir Thomas, having no permanent residence in London, had been obliged to take a furnished house for the season. Since the early years of their marriage, the baronet and his wife had never spent more than three weeks, or, at the most, a month, of each season in town; neither had they travelled much abroad. Their adoption of a quiet country life all these years had not been without good and sufficient reasons. The chief reason of all was a laudable desire to economize in money matters. The estate had come to Sir Thomas considerably burdened, and till every penny of mortgage upon it should be cleared off, both Sir Thomas and his wife were determined to keep down every expense as much as possible. The establishment at Stammars was kept up with due regard to comfort, as well as the family's position in society; but no luxuries were indulged in, and all extravagances were carefully eschewed. A whole season in town, and an autumn on the Continent, however much she might have enjoyed them, would certainly have been set down by Lady Dudgeon as needless extravagances: and she had sufficient heroism in her disposition to give them up without a word of repining. But all this now belonged to the past. Every penny of incumbrance had been cleared off the estate some two years ago, and matters of late had been still further assisted by a handsome legacy from a distant relative. Then, just in the nick of time, had come the opportunity for Sir Thomas to offer himself as member for Pembridge. Lady Dudgeon had been the first to seize the occasion. From the first, she had seen in her mind's eye all the brilliant results

that might be made to follow "in sequence due" this one bold step. As in a vision, she had seen the whole glittering pageant. No longer would she be compelled to content herself with a miserable three weeks in London: she would have a whole glorious season to flutter through. She would have a new brougham, and there should be no handsomer horses than hers seen in the park. As for garden parties and flower shows, as for the opera and the theatre—she would simply do her best to make up for lost time. Poor Sir Thomas, when he allowed himself, very much against his will, to be nominated at the hustings in place of the late lamented Mr. Rackstraw, had not the faintest notion of the splendid conceptions which even then were fermenting in his wife's brain. But he had not been many days in London before he got some glimmering of what was in store for him.

"I feel, dear, as if we had been buried all those years—as if we had never really begun to enjoy life till now," said her ladyship to him one morning at breakfast.

"And yet it seems to me that we have spent many happy days at Stammars," returned Sir Thomas.

"Happy, after a fashion, of course; but so different from life here!" continued her ladyship.

"Different indeed!" echoed Sir Thomas, with a sigh.

"To-morrow is my birthday, Thomas; and as you always make me a present on that occasion, I want you, this year, to let me choose for myself what it shall be."

"Certainly, Matilda. I shall be most happy for you to do so."

"That noble heart of yours! What I want is that you shall take me to Long Acre, and buy me a new carriage."

"Good gracious, Matilda!"

"As the wife of the member for Pembridge, I could not think of being seen about London in a hired brougham; neither, I am sure, would you wish me to do anything so paltry."

"But the landau at Stammars—if painted and furbished up——"

"A market-cart, my dear—neither more nor less than a market-cart," cried Lady Dudgeon. "I should be the laughing-stock of the Park. No; if you cannot afford me a new brougham out of your legacy, why, I'll go about in a hansom. I'd far rather do that than be seen in one of those horrid livery-stable abominations, which always put me in mind of fevers and other dreadful things."

When in London, Sir Thomas was always one of the most wretched of men—indeed, a town of any kind was to him a place to be escaped from as quickly as possible. To him it was ever a mystery how people could be found to dwell contentedly for years among acres of brick and mortar, inhaling diluted smoke, and leading lives that were one perpetual round of noise, turmoil, and confusion. He had not been in London more than three days before there came over him a

longing that was almost painful in its intensity to get clean away out of sight of it—out of hearing of it—if only for a few hours. Taking advantage of a visit of his wife to her milliner, he stole out of the house—and he really felt as if he were doing something that he ought not to do—and a swift hansom soon set him down at "Jack Straw's Castle." A long stretch through the valley on the other side of the Hampstead hills, amid the sights and sounds of country life, sent him back to Harley Street a happier man for the time being.

But the watch which her ladyship kept over him did not allow of a too frequent indulgence in such forbidden luxuries.

"I hope, my dear, that you will not be long before you decide as to the particular question that you intend to make your own this session," she said to her husband, one morning about a fortnight after the opening of Parliament.

"Really, my dear," said Sir Thomas, insinuatingly, "everything is so strange to me just at present—the forms of the House, and all that, you know—that I have hardly had time to give my mind to anything else."

"Just so, my love. Of course, every allowance must be made for that. But still I think you ought to be preparing—working up a subject, mastering the details, and so on. What do you say to the Sugar Duties, now? That is a topic about which the public are likely to be greatly interested before long. Or Indian Finance? That is a fruitful subject."

"But, then, I know absolutely nothing about either of them."

"So much the better. You will bring to the study and discussion of these great questions a mind fresh and unprejudiced—a mind unfettered by the bonds of tradition or the obligations of party."

"But, in addition to not knowing anything about the Sugar Duties or Indian Finance, I don't care about them—no, not a brass farthing."

"All the more will you be able to discuss them with impartiality. Your capacious mind will enable you to look at a question from several different points of view, and to give to each its proper value."

"But, even supposing I had the inclination—which I certainly have not," persisted poor Sir Thomas, "I have not the remotest idea how to set about working up any such subjects as those mentioned by your ladyship."

"My dear, you surprise me! What is Mr. Pomeroy for? It cannot, of course, be expected that you should waste your time in picking out a lot of dreary statistics, or in wading through a heap of dry, mechanical details. All that forms part of the duties of your secretary. It is his place to bring to a common focus all the various facts and figures that may have any bearing on the subject in hand. Such a summary of facts and figures could be readily mastered by you in the course of a morning's study. You would then have to consider the

line of argument which you would adopt in stating your case to the House; and having divided your subject into two or three different heads, you would have, finally, to work up the various points in the most effective manner possible, taking care to conclude with one of those glowing perorations—one of those spontaneous bursts of eloquence—for which you are so justly famed."

Sir Thomas sat staring at his wife in speechless dismay. After a little while he got up and walked to the window, and stood there jingling his loose silver. "What a pity it is, Matilda, that you are not the member for Pembridge instead of me! You would have done far more justice to the position than I can ever hope to do."

"Tut, tut! my dear. You must not talk so foolishly," said her ladyship, complacently. "I know your abilities far better than you do yourself. All that you lack is confidence, and that will come to you in due time."

"I suppose those worthy people down at Pembridge wouldn't feel satisfied unless I made some sort of an attempt at a speech sometime before the session's over, eh?"

"Certainly not. So the sooner you take the plunge, the better for everyone. How would you like to meet your constituents in the autumn, if the sound of your voice had never been heard in the House?"

Sir Thomas stood without speaking for a minute or two. At last he said, "I think I'll go and have a little talk with Pomeroy."

"Do so, my dear. I have no doubt that his views will coincide with mine. Mr. Pomeroy is a very clever young man—and so exemplary too! I am highly pleased with him."

Sir Thomas found Jack in the library, where, having nothing to do for his employer, he was trying to hammer out a few verses for one of the magazines; only, as the fair face of Eleanor Lloyd would keep coming between his muse and him, it is to be feared that he was not making very satisfactory progress.

Sir Thomas gave a little sigh, and sat down at the opposite side of the table. "Pomeroy," he began presently, "her ladyship seems to think that it's about time I made a little bit of a splash in the House. Rather out of my line, you know; but I suppose it has to be done, and the sooner it's got over, the better. So what I want you to do for me is this: there's to be a big debate on the Sugar Duties in about a month's time, and I want you to work the subject up, and write out a bit of a speech for me that I can get off by heart. I know that's a sort of thing that comes easy enough to a clever young chap like you, but it would be deuced difficult to me; just as difficult, I daresay, as it would be for you to buy half a score bullocks at a fair, and make sure at the same time that you were getting full value for your money."

"I shall be glad to have a little more to do, Sir Thomas. At present I don't feel as if I were earning my salary."

"You mustn't make the speech too long, you know, or else I shall be sure to forget some of it—and you mustn't even hint to her ladyship that it's not my own composition."

"You may rely implicitly upon my discretion, sir."

"And then I want you to write out a second speech, which must be simply an amplification of the first, with a few fine words and big phrases dropped in here and there, like plums in a dumpling. This second speech is for my constituents, and you must arrange with the editor for its appearance in the *Pembridge Gazette* on the Saturday following my delivery of speech number one in the House."

"I comprehend perfectly, sir," said Jack.

"You are a good fellow, Pomeroy—a very good fellow," added Sir Thomas. "I like you much. Her ladyship likes you much. She quite values you. But not a word to her about our little arrangement—and don't forget the plums in the dumpling."

Sir Thomas had hardly been gone five minutes, when there came a discreet tap at the door, and in walked Olive Deane.

"Good morning, Mr. Pomeroy," she said. "I hear that the box has arrived from Mudie's. Her ladyship gave me the privilege of ordering two or three books on my own account, and I am anxious to see whether they have come."

"Here it is," said Jack; "unopened as yet; so that you will have the pleasure of being the first to explore its contents."

"You seem to understand our sex—a little," said Olive, as she turned over the books. "It is singular, but true, but I should not derive half so much pleasure from turning over the contents of this box had anyone, especially another woman, done it before me. But we women are full of contrarieties."

"It is precisely those contrarieties which make your sex so charming. You are so full of surprises. No woman, it seems to me, can ever be altogether commonplace."

"Oh, I grant you that we are full of surprises," said Olive. "A man, for instance, has only one or two ways of showing his temper, whereas we have fifty ways, all different from each other: which prevents monotony. If we cannot startle you with a wise or witty remark, we prefer to try an inane one, rather than not startle you at all. We are melodramatic to the backbone, and are always studying a climax or a surprise, if it be only in the petty details of every-day life."

"I feel that I ought to say something pretty here, in deprecation of the severity of your judgment," said Jack, with a smile, "but nothing worthy of the occasion occurs to me at present. I fear I am rather stupid this morning."

"Stupidity is certainly the great failing of your sex," said Olive, with candour. "How seldom one meets with a man who has anything to say worth listening to; or if he has, how rarely he knows how to say

it. No; in a comparison of your sex as against ours, it seems to me that there is only one point wherein we fail—only one grand faculty that men possess and that we have no idea of."

"And that is——?"

"The faculty of silence. The want of that, and of that alone, has lost us the supremacy of the world."

Jack laughed, and Olive went on with her examination of the books.

It had been a debatable point with Lady Dudgeon whether or not she should take her children to London with her; but Sophy's earnest pleading not to be left behind had at last won a half-reluctant consent from her ladyship. But there was another reason, of which Sophy knew nothing, why the young ladies should accompany their mamma. The truth was that her ladyship found Miss Deane's services so useful to her in many ways that she could by no means make up her mind to let Olive stay behind at Stammars. By so doing she would have to take on herself again a number of duties of which Miss Deane had of late relieved her; and how would it be possible for her to do that, with all the extra demands on her time which a residence in town necessarily implied? If Miss Deane had been useful to her in the country, in London she would be invaluable: so to London Olive and the young ladies were transferred in due course. Lady Dudgeon was one of those people who delight in keeping an elaborate series of housekeeping books, in which every item of domestic expenditure is carefully tabulated, and against which the tradespeople's accounts can be minutely checked. During the last few months, however, her ladyship's eyesight had begun to fail her, whereupon her medical man had threatened her with spectacles unless she would consent to give her eyes a little more rest. The threat frightened her. She could not afford to give up her diary; she could not find in her heart to curtail her correspondence; she must perforce give up her housekeeping accounts, or delegate the labour connected with them into other hands.

When, some three months later, Olive Deane arrived at Stammars, her ladyship's book-keeping had got terribly into arrear. She was greatly perturbed in her mind thereby, feeling perfectly sure that her tradespeople were all aware that she no longer checked their accounts, and that they were leagued together to overreach her in every possible way. Olive had not been many days at Stammars before she found out what was amiss, whereupon she begged so earnestly that the books and accounts might be put into her hands, that her ladyship, not without a considerable degree of reluctance, agreed at last to entrust them to her. And she had never had cause to regret having done so. Everything was done almost—not quite, but almost—as well as she could have done it herself; and her ladyship was not slow to sing the praises of Olive.

If there was one thing on which Lady Dudgeon prided herself in

secret more than another, it was upon her epistolary talents. She was, indeed, a most voluminous and untiring correspondent. However trivial might be the subject about which she was writing, she had a copious stream of words at command—a stream that never ran itself dry. The involution of her sentences was only equalled by the ambiguity of their meaning. Because her correspondents acknowledged that they had to read her letters two or three times over before they could thoroughly comprehend all that was intended to be conveyed by them, she—and in some cases, they, also—came to look upon it as a sign of profundity, of deep thought clothed with the fine flower of rhetoric, that such a difficulty should be so generally admitted to exist. To have written out a plain statement of facts in a few plain words, was a feat of which her ladyship was quite incapable, and one which, to do her justice, she would have despised herself for even attempting. She had been so often complimented on her letter-writing (and knowing for a fact, as she did, that several of her correspondents carefully preserved her epistles) that there had grown up in her mind a sort of vague idea that, after her demise, some one would certainly be found who would look upon it as an act of pious duty to awaken the world to a sense of its loss, to let it see for itself what a genius had dwelt for years in its midst, save by a few choice spirits, unappreciated and unknown. There was only one way by which a heedless world could be thus enlightened, and that was by publishing—posthumously, of course—a selection from her ladyship's correspondence. The fame denied to her during her lifetime would be hers after death. After this fashion it was that Lady Dudgeon fed her imagination: and yet there were not wanting people who denied her the possession of any such commodity, and who mentally catalogued her as one of the most prosaic and commonplace of her sex.

"I hope you have not forgotten our conversation in my cousin's office at Pembridge?" said Olive suddenly to Jack, as she shut down the lid of the box and put her own two particular volumes under her arm, preparatory to leaving the room.

"There are some conversations that I can never forget: that is one of them."

"I have sometimes thought since how very foolish it was of me to talk to you in the way I did on that occasion. But you had only yourself to blame."

"I am not aware that there was any foolishness in the matter: quite the contrary. But tell me in what way I was to blame."

"In causing my aunt to feel such an interest in you. Me, too, you interested. We were both anxious to assist you, if it were possible to do so."

"And you have assisted me, and I thank both you and Mrs. Kelvin very heartily for it."

"Is not Miss Lloyd charming?"

"Thoroughly charming."

"You seem to have succeeded in interesting her, as you interested my aunt and me," said Olive, with one of her wintry smiles.

"Miss Lloyd has seen so little of the world, and is so fresh and untutored, that anyone could interest her whose conversation is not absolutely stupid."

"John Pomeroy, the Hesperian fruit is within your grasp!" said Miss Deane, changing her manner in a moment to one of intense earnestness. "Put forth your hand and seize it. Be not slow to make it your own. If you are, be sure that some one else will quickly claim the golden prize." Her black eyes, fixed steadily on his face, seemed full of some hidden meaning. With a grave inclination of the head, she turned and slowly left the room.

"I *will* seize the golden fruit, chère demoiselle; I *will* make it my own!" muttered Pomeroy to himself, as Olive closed the door. "Though why you should feel so strange an interest in my fortunes, is more than I can comprehend. A crooked brain and a dark heart are yours, Olive Deane, or else my reading of your character is altogether a wrong one."

CHAPTER XI.

IN KENSINGTON GARDENS.

THE feeling of curiosity which had actuated Miss Deane in her desire to see her rival, as she called Eleanor Lloyd in her thoughts, had been almost as powerful as that which, for the time being, had made John Pomeroy its slave. When Miss Deane did see Eleanor, she could not help acknowledging to herself that Matthew Kelvin's violent passion for that lady was not without some justification. That Miss Lloyd was indeed very lovely, she at once admitted; for Olive was free from that common feminine failing which refuses to acknowledge that another, and more especially a rival, can be the possessor of superior charms, either of body or mind; and she told herself at once that, as far as mere good looks went, she could not hope to stand the slightest chance in a comparison with Miss Lloyd. So long as Miss Lloyd should remain unmarried, Matthew Kelvin would never look with serious eyes elsewhere; and Olive saw with a sort of savage satisfaction how quickly and readily Mr. John Pomeroy had fallen into the same toils in which the lawyer had been enmeshed before him. Her keen eyes saw that which was suspected by no one else—that a few short hours had indeed sufficed to seal Pomeroy's fate. So far everything had gone well with her; everything had answered her highest expectations. But when she looked on the other side of the question; when she came to ask herself, "Does this girl return this man's love?" she could not feel

quite so sanguine as to the result. That Eleanor liked the company of John Pomeroy, and that his conversation interested her, Olive could see clearly enough. But liking is not love, though it is often a big stride on the road towards it. All that was left her to do was to hope for the best and to remain as quietly watchful as she had hitherto been.

Of all these plottings and counter-plottings that were going on under her very nose, poor innocent Lady Dudgeon dreamt nothing. She had long ago made up her mind that her ensuing season in town should be fruitful of much pleasure and much enjoyment to her. But chief of all the pleasures that she looked forward to was that of assisting her darling Eleanor to select—or, better still, of selecting for her—a suitable partner for life. She had not been more than a fortnight in Harley Street before she began to cast wary eyes around, and to make cautious inquiries here and there with respect to the pretensions and positions of certain individuals who, even thus early, had evinced a generous alacrity to sell themselves for life for the sake of twenty thousand pounds—the young lady who was tacked to the money being of course thrown in as an unavoidable necessity.

The interest shown by Lady Dudgeon in the fortunes of Miss Lloyd had its origin in a feeling that dated from the time when Eleanor was little more than a mere child. At the risk of his own life, Jacob Lloyd had succeeded in stopping her ladyship's ponies one day when they were running away with her, and making in a straight line for a very deep gravel-pit that may still be seen close by the edge of Dingley Common. Jacob having been considerably bruised and knocked about in his struggle with the ponies, Lady Dudgeon could do no less than call several times at Bridgeley to inquire after his health. There it was that she first saw Eleanor, at that time a flaxen-haired, blue-eyed child of eight, in short frocks and pinafores. She drew the child to her, looked her fixedly in the face for a moment or two, and then stooped and kissed her. Impulsive Nelly at once flung her arms round Lady Dudgeon's neck. "You *are* pretty, and I *do* love you!" she cried; and from that moment her ladyship's heart was won. She would insist upon taking Nelly back to Stammars, and that first visit was but the precursor of several others.

Lady Dudgeon was generally looked upon as a cold-mannered, unimpressionable sort of person, and her strange partiality for Mr. Lloyd's daughter was a surprise to all who knew her—to her husband as much as anyone. But Sir Thomas was eminently good-natured, and he yielded to his wife's whim in this respect as in everything else. Before long, indeed, he grew almost as fond of his Bonnybell, as he called her, as Lady Dudgeon herself. Having no children of his own at this time, he liked very well to have Eleanor about him—he liked to have her tugging at his coat-tails, or hanging on his arm, or sitting in

front of him on his pony as he rode about the fields looking at his crops or watching his labourers at work.

Even as a child there was about Eleanor Lloyd a native distinction of manner that few people failed to observe. Combined with this was a sweet, fearless freedom—like the fearlessness of a fawn—that sprung from a total unconsciousness of self, and that charmed without being aware of its own existence. At ten years of age Eleanor felt as much at home in Lady Dudgeon's drawing-room, among Lady Dudgeon's fine company, as she did when helping Biddy to make a custard in the kitchen.

Lady Dudgeon's liking for Eleanor did not lessen with years. The child was a frequent visitor at Stammars up to the time that she was sent to Germany to finish her education. And when her two years of absence were over, and she was back again at home, the intercourse was at once resumed, although by this time Lady Dudgeon had two young daughters of her own. After the sudden death of Jacob Lloyd, and the announcement that Eleanor had come into a fortune of twenty thousand pounds, there seemed all the more reason why the bond of intimacy should be drawn still closer; and no one was surprised when it was given out that Miss Lloyd had accepted Lady Dudgeon's invitation to live with her at Stammars for the present.

A day or two before the departure of the family for Harley Street, Lady Dudgeon called Eleanor into her bedroom. "My dear," she said, "I am going to show you something that you have never seen before—something that no eyes but my own have seen for years. To you they may, perhaps, seem hardly worth keeping, but they are very precious to me."

She opened a drawer as she spoke, the contents of which were covered with several layers of tissue-paper. When the paper had been carefully removed, there were displayed to Eleanor's view several articles that had evidently belonged to a child. There was a little crimson frock and a sash, a pair of tiny shoes, a broken doll, and part of a necklace of coral beads. Eleanor looked up wonderingly. For the first time in her life she saw tears in the eyes of Lady Dudgeon. "They belonged to my little daughter, whom I lost before I ever saw you. She died when she was four years old. She would just have been your age had she lived. Like you, she was fair and had blue eyes. That first day when I saw you at your father's, it almost seemed to me as if my own lost darling had come back again. I could not help loving you then, dear, and I have loved you ever since."

From the first moment that Gerald Warburton set eyes on Eleanor Lloyd, he made up his mind that, if it were in the possibility of things to do so, he would make her his wife, and from that determination he had never wavered. The more he saw of her the more settled became his conviction that he had never really loved till now. Flirtations he

had had, and little love-smarts in plenty. Many a pleasant face had haunted his dreams for a night or two, but never for longer. In his writing-desk were two or three crumpled gloves, a ribbon or two, and at least half a dozen cartes-de-visite: tokens all, as he sometimes said to himself, of how hard he had tried to love, of how often he had fancied himself to be in love, and of the very short space of time it had taken him to discover either what an ass he had made of himself, or what an ass some girl had made of him. Such mementoes are not without a certain amount of instructiveness. Gerald looked upon them in the light of warnings. "How terrible and strange it is to think," he said to himself one day, "that each one of these gages d'amour represents a most foolish moment in my life, a moment that might have been the turning-point of my existence: such a moment as has been the turning-point of many a man's existence! How well one knows the history of such relics! A pair of bright eyes, a waltz, a glass of champagne, a glove or a ribbon dropped by accident or design; or else a moonlight ramble capped with some poet's soft nonsense, and a little hand nestling timidly under your arm. Then comes a pressure of the tiny hand, an appealing glance into the bright eyes, a whispered word, and unless your enslaver does not really care for you—in which case nothing but your vanity suffers—your fate is sealed, and the chances are that you wake up next morning to find that, for the sake of an hour's foolish romance, you have bound yourself for life to a person for whom in your heart you don't care the price of a box of cigars."

So moralized Gerald, as he took his relics out of their resting-place for the last time and dropped them quietly, one by one, into the fire. Without a single pang he saw them flare and shrivel into ashes. Let the dead past bury its dead.

No doubt ever clouded his mind as to the strength and reality of that passion which in these latter days had taken possession of his heart. It was no mere will-o'-the-wisp, to be followed with passionate footsteps through brake and morass, but the Planet of Love itself, serene and beautiful: the lodestar of his life and fortunes shining down on him at last with a light that nothing but death could ever again eclipse.

Since that first meeting with Eleanor he had made it his business to see as much of her as the exigencies of his position would allow of his doing. Except when they had company, he generally dined with Sir Thomas and Lady Dudgeon. He had the happy knack of being able to select topics of conversation that had an interest for both of them. He did his best to please them, and he succeeded, simply that he might be able thereby to see more of Miss Lloyd than he could otherwise have hoped to do. The peculiar circumstances under which Eleanor and he had first met had done more to break the ice between them than a month of ordinary intercourse would have done; besides

which, it had supplied them with a subject for conversation that Eleanor seemed never to grow tired of, and one in which our artful Gerald feigned a far deeper interest than he really felt.

Days and weeks had come and gone, and he was still as undecided as ever what steps to take in the matter of the sealed packet. Kelvin still maintained his mysterious silence. Gerald had said to himself that, after having been at Stammars for a little while, after having seen and made the acquaintance of Eleanor, should Kelvin not then have spoken, he would write to him in his real name, and demand some explanation of his unaccountable silence. This would at once force matters to a climax, and he, Gerald, would then be able, in the natural course of events, to assume his proper name and position. But day by day was flitting away, and he still neglected to take this very obvious course. As matters had turned out, he shrank from doing so. He loved this girl with all the strength of his ardent temperament. Should he declare himself, such a declaration would take from her all that she had hitherto deemed her own, all that was most dear to her in life: name, wealth, position—everything. Should his be the hand to knowingly strike her such a blow? The more he thought of it, the more hateful such a proceeding seemed to him. He could never hope to see Love's sweet light dawn in those beautiful eyes were he to smite her thus. And then how much more precious to him would it be to win her love for his own sake, to win it as a poor man, to fight for her against the host of other suitors who would surely come when they should discover what a golden prize was there for the winning; to say no word to her of this thing, but to let her rest in blissful ignorance till their wedding day was come. After that, she might, perchance, learn to love him all the more for his long silence. Thus it was that Gerald argued with himself, and thus it was that to the world at large he was still known as John Pomeroy, secretary to Sir Thomas Dudgeon, at an honorarium of one hundred and fifty guineas per annum.

As Gerald was strolling quietly through Kensington Gardens one day between luncheon and dinner, he was met by Eleanor, who was coming from an opposite direction. They shook hands, and Gerald turned and walked back with her.

"What are you meditating this morning?" asked Eleanor. "A sonnet, or another speech on the Sugar Duties?" She had seen and heard enough to know from what fount it was that Sir Thomas derived the stream of his Parliamentary eloquence.

"Neither anything so sentimental on the one hand, nor anything so prosaic on the other," answered Gerald. "I was better employed in listening to the birds, and in marking how the brown buds were here and there beginning to open themselves to the sun."

"You are easily satisfied. I should have thought that the Ride would have more attractions for you."

"Not at all. In London, humanity is so plentiful that trees and birds seem sometimes the best of company. In the country, where trees and birds are so common, a fresh face is sometimes a godsend."

"But you who have been so accustomed to change—to seeing fresh faces and visiting strange places, must surely find it both dull and tedious to spend your days among blue-books and parliamentary reports, wading through columns of dreary statistics, and concocting speeches which another than yourself will deliver?"

"I did find it both dull and tedious at first, but I don't find it so now."

"And why do you not find it so now?"

He would have liked to answer: "Because your presence here has made my work glad. Because I could count no work as slavery if through it I were brought into contact with you. Because, since I have learned to love you, life has assumed for me an altogether different complexion from that which it wore before—is imbued with altogether different purposes and ambitions." But the time was not yet ripe for him to say all this, or even part of it. Some more commonplace answer must be found to her question.

"I think," said he, "it must be because human motives and human purposes are so intimately mingled with the dry bones of politics, that politics exercise such a strange fascination over nearly everyone who is brought into close contact with them. Certainly to me, and that no very long time ago, they seemed the dryest and most uninteresting study to which a man could devote his time."

"But you have seen reason to change your opinion since then?" said Eleanor.

"I have," said Gerald, emphatically. "From the moment I leapt into the arena—from the moment that I ceased to be a looker-on and became a gladiator myself—in the very humblest of positions though it was—my blood seemed to warm to the struggle. I buckled my armour round me with a sort of unholy glee at the thought that I was about to contend with shapes of bone and sinew; that my life need no longer have to content itself with pottering about among the petty dilettanteisms of Art, while never quite certain in my own mind whether it was Nature's intention that I should develop into a man of genius or degenerate into a blockhead."

Eleanor laughed. "Then you think that you have found your right groove at last," she said.

"As to the right groove, I don't know that this particular one is better for me than any other in which there would be earnest work to do in which I could take a hearty interest. Certainly I have come to find a degree of interest in what I am now doing that could surprise no one more than it does myself."

"You ought to be in Parliament yourself, Mr. Pomeroy, instead of filling the anomalous position you do now."

"One must learn to creep before one can walk," said Gerald, with a shrug.

"But some people never get beyond creeping.——If I were a man, I should certainly strive to get into Parliament," added Eleanor, a minute or two later. "How easy it is for a man to have a noble ambition!"

"Then you like a man to be ambitious?"

"I could certainly never look up to anyone who was not so."

"I am afraid that you aim your arrow too high for these commonplace days. There are many kinds of ambition that a man may occupy himself with, and yet none of them may be really ignoble: Sir Thomas Dudgeon's, for instance. It is his ambition to breed superior sheep and oxen—and it is decidedly for our benefit that he should do so. I have a friend in Paris who has a crippled sister, and the object of his ambition is the invention of an invalid's chair that shall be superior to any other. These are not large ambitions, but they are certainly very laudable ones."

"If you know the object of a man's ambition, cannot you from that gauge, to a certain extent at least, the quality of his mind?"

"Undoubtedly you can, to a certain extent, as you say. But there are many men who keep their ambitious dreams to themselves as closely as they do their bank-book. When such a man dies, the general verdict is that he might have succeeded very much better in life if he had only had a little more ambition, whereas the probability is that he succeeded so ill because he had too much ambition."

"I hardly follow you," said Eleanor.

"Let us say that such a man's ambition was to stand on the topmost pinnacle of the Jungfrau; and because he felt that he had neither the strength nor the skill requisite to carve his way step by step to the summit, rather than content himself with any lesser altitude, he preferred to sit quietly down, dumb and disappointed, among the ignoble crowd at the bottom."

They walked on for a little while in silence. Gerald kept feasting himself with little side-glances at Eleanor's face. And it was a face well worth looking at. A delicate, slightly aquiline nose; two eyes of the deepest and tenderest blue, that put you in mind of an April sky when the clouds have divided after a shower; and massive coils of rich flaxen hair that seemed full of stolen sunshine. Her upper lip had a chiselled fineness of curve and outline rarely found among English women, and this feature it was that gave a special distinction to the character of her face. But far before everything else was a prevailing sweetness of expression—a sweetness that was without insipidity, that only served to heighten that delicate verve—the outcome of an ardent and generous nature—which shone through everything she said and did. She had a small basket on her arm this morning, for she had her pensioners already, and was returning from visiting two of them: a poor

old orange woman who had broken her arm through slipping on the ice; and a young mother whose husband lay ill of a fever in the hospital. Gerald, glancing now and again into the beautiful face beside him, felt his heart thrill strangely. He would have dearly liked to fling his arms about her and print a thousand kisses on her lips.

"What is the latest news of the little waif?" asked Gerald, suddenly, after a pause.

"I have no news other than that which you know already."

"Then she has not been claimed?"

"No. She is still under Mrs. Nixon's care."

"It is not at all likely that anyone will now come forward and claim her."

"I hope with all my heart that they won't. Those to whom she belonged left her to be found by a stranger, or to perish; and after such an act as that they can hardly want to reclaim her."

"I should think that they would hardly dare do so."

"The law would surely punish a deed so detestable. But I have little fear of anyone coming forward. I feel that the child belongs to me, and to me alone."

"Have I, then, no share in her?" asked Gerald, with a smile.

"It was agreed that you should give your share over to me," answered Eleanor.

"I may at least be allowed to feel a little interest in the child's future fortunes."

"As deep an interest as you like. You are her preserver, and yours shall be the first name that she shall be taught to speak. But for all that, you must let me claim her as altogether my own."

"Oh, with all my heart. I should make a very poor guardian, I am afraid, for such a wee morsel of humanity."

"I have regular accounts from Mrs. Nixon every two or three days, and next week I am going down to Stammars to see her."

"I wish she only thought half as much of me as she does of that young customer down at Stammars!" said Gerald, rather disconsolately, to himself when he had parted from Eleanor.

"What has come over you, child?" said Lady Dudgeon to Eleanor, two or three days afterwards. "This is the third time this morning that I have caught you in a day-dream. Anyone who did not know better would certainly say that you were in love."

"Then they would certainly say what was not true," said Eleanor, with a blush and a smile.

"I hope so, I am sure," said her ladyship, emphatically. "I don't think your time has come yet, dear."

Eleanor was used to Lady Dudgeon's phraseology, and did not reply.

No; she certainly was not in love, she said to herself. But it was

rather strange how often Mr. Pomeroy had been in her thoughts of late. She had caught herself thinking about him several times: day-dreaming, Lady Dudgeon called it. And why should she not think about him? she asked herself. He interested her. There was about him something different from anyone she had ever met before. If only she could have assisted him to get into Parliament, how happy that would have made her! Despite his careless, easy way of talking, she felt sure that he was ambitious. But with only a hundred and fifty pounds a year, and no friends to push him forward, a man's ambitious dreams must perforce be buried in his heart. If only she could endow him with some portion of her wealth!—— But here she broke off with a blush, and made up her mind that for the future she would not think quite so much about Mr. Pomeroy. "I must remember that I am not to think quite so much about him," she said to herself. But the very fact of having to remember this had only the effect of bringing his image more frequently to her mind.

CHAPTER XII.

THE FACE IN THE GLASS.

FROM Harley Street, Cavendish Square, to Ormond Square, Bayswater, is but a short distance as the crow flies, but it was enough to transform the John Pomeroy of one place into the Gerald Warburton of the other. And such transformations were very frequent with Gerald just at this time. Now that he had learned to love Ambrose Murray's daughter, Ambrose Murray himself had acquired a fresh interest in his eyes, and he very rarely let more than two days pass over without finding himself in Miss Bellamy's sitting-room. From Miss Bellamy he had but one secret—his love for Eleanor. Everything else he told her: but to Ambrose Murray nothing was told. Murray had not the slightest idea that his daughter was in London; and so incurious was he respecting her that he never even asked the name of the friends with whom she was living; and yet it was impossible to doubt that in his strangely constituted heart he loved her passionately. He still adhered to his first determination—not to see her, nor even to let her become aware of his existence, till he could stand before her, a man whose innocence the world was now as eager to proclaim as it had been before to swear that he was guilty.

Miss Bellamy felt it as a great deprivation that she could not go to see Eleanor, whom she had known and loved from infancy. But had she done so, Eleanor would have certainly been seen in Ormond Square before many hours were over—and then what a meeting might there not have been! It was requisite that Eleanor should believe that Miss Bellamy had gone abroad for a short time, and the latter lady went out

less frequently than she would otherwise have done, so great was her dread of unexpectedly encountering Miss Lloyd in the street.

"What are we to do now that we have found Jacoby?" said Gerald to Murray the day after their excursion into the City.

"That is just what I want you to tell me," was Murray's complacent rejoinder, as he took one of Gerald's hands between his thin palms and patted it gently. "Your knowledge of the world will enable you to say what the next step ought to be."

"I am afraid that my knowledge of the world, as you call it, is altogether at fault in this instance," said Gerald, with a dubious shake of the head. "To find a man, even in the great wilderness of London, is an altogether different thing from working up a chain of evidence strong enough to convict him of a crime committed twenty years ago."

"But don't you see, Gerald," argued Murray in his quietly earnest way, "that the very fact of our having found this man constitutes the first link in the chain? All the proofs in the world would have availed us nothing had we not been able to find him. But now that we have got the first link complete, you may depend upon it that the forging of the second will follow in due course." He spoke with an air of such thorough conviction, that for a moment or two Gerald hardly knew how to answer him.

"I am certainly at a nonplus," he said at last. "I was never more in the dark in my life. Have you any objection to my consulting Byrne?"

"No objection in the world. Consult anybody and everybody, as may seem best to you."

"Should I find it necessary to do so, have I your permission to tell him everything?"

"You have: my full permission."

"Mind you, I don't build any hopes on my interview with Byrne. I don't see how he can possibly help us; but still I will consult him."

"And out of that consultation the forging of the second link will be accomplished," said Murray. Again Gerald shook his head. Slightly exasperating to him was Murray's air of thorough conviction, unbacked as it was by the least fragment of proof, or even the vaguest suggestions as to either how or where such proof might be forthcoming.

Two days later, having an afternoon to spare, Gerald chartered a hansom for Amelia Terrace, Battersea, and picked up Ambrose Murray by the way. He had seen enough of Byrne to make him believe that he was a man who might be thoroughly trusted, and he had made up his mind to lay the case before him in its entirety. He left the cab with his companion in it at the corner of the terrace, and three minutes later he was closeted with Mr. Byrne.

That gentleman was smoking his long-stemmed pipe with the china bowl. He squeezed Gerald's outstretched hand, and greeted him

with one of his expansive smiles, which came and went as suddenly as though produced by a clock-work movement inside his head.

"That was a neat stroke of business that we did the other night, sir, though it is I who say it," remarked Mr. Byrne.

"Yes; you managed it very cleverly, and it is on that very subject that I have come to see you again."

"I am yours to command, Mr. Warburton."

"If I recollect rightly, when I saw you before, you gave me to understand that you were in Court on the day that Ambrose Murray took his trial for the murder of Paul Stilling?"

"I was in Court at the time, and I retain a very clear recollection of the different features of the case."

"Can you tell me what impression you formed at the time as to the guilt or innocence of the prisoner?"

"Now you put a very difficult question to me. Anyone who has seen much of criminal trials will tell you what an exceedingly unsafe thing it is to form an opinion from a prisoner's demeanour as to his guilt or otherwise."

"Never mind the prisoner's demeanour in this case. I simply want to know what your own impression was, as a result of what you saw and heard at the trial."

"Well, the weight of evidence, as no doubt you are aware, was dead against the prisoner, and that very fact will, as a rule, go a long way in the formation of a person's opinion. Still, in spite of that, at the time it was my impression that, whoever else it might have been, Murray was not the murderer."

"I am glad to hear you say that," said Gerald, heartily. "Because, after being shut up for twenty years, Murray has escaped from prison."

"Phew! That's good news, Mr. Warburton, very good news! I never could see my way to believe that man guilty."

"That man it was, and no other, who made the third in our little party the other night."

The china pipe had never been so near being broken as it was at that moment. It slipped from Byrne's nerveless fingers, and only the hearthrug saved it. This brought back his presence of mind.

"In telling you this," said Gerald, "you will understand at once the amount of confidence which I am placing in your discretion."

"Not undeservedly, Mr. Warburton—of that you may rest fully assured!" said Byrne, warmly. "I feel honoured by your confidence in this matter, sir; and if I can be of any further assistance either to you or Mr. Murray, my services are entirely at your command."

"That is just the point to which I am coming," said Gerald. "We do want your further assistance. It is for that very purpose I am here to see you to-day: it is for that very purpose Mr. Murray himself has come to see you."

"Mr. Murray here—to see me!"

"He is waiting in a cab at the corner of the street. I will go and fetch him."

Presently Ambrose Murray entered, ushered in by Gerald. Byrne regarded him with mingled feelings of respect, curiosity, and pity. It was characteristic of the man that during the few minutes of Gerald's absence he had found time to put on a better coat, and also, if the whole truth must be confessed, to impart the very slightest extra suspicion of rouge to his cheeks. The pipe was not again visible during the interview.

Gerald introduced Mr. Murray in his real name to Byrne, who had hardly spoken half a dozen words to him at their previous meeting.

"I am proud to see you, sir, under my humble roof," said Byrne, "and I should have been proud to have entertained you during my days of prosperity. But that was not to be," he added, with a melancholy shake of the head.

"And now to business," said Gerald. "Mr. Murray is firmly convinced that Max Jacoby was the murderer of Paul Stilling."

"Aye, aye!" interjected Byrne.

"As a matter of course, the great desire of his life is to prove his innocence of the terrible crime of which in the eye of the law he is still adjudged to be guilty. He can only do this by bringing home the guilt to the real murderer. Assuming Mr. Murray's view of the case to be the correct one, the question is, by what means is Jacoby's guilt to be brought home to him?"

"And that is the problem you have come to me to help you to solve?" said Byrne.

Murray answered by a grave inclination of the head.

"I don't know that I ever had such a poser put to me before," said Byrne.

"It is the very difficulty of the problem that has induced me to seek your services, Mr. Byrne," said Gerald.

"I must put on my considering-cap," said Byrne. "I must sandpaper my brains."

He was silent for a little while. Then he said: "I see no light at present: not the faintest gleam. You must let me have time to think about it—to smoke over it. My old pipe has made many a difficulty clear for me, perhaps it may help me in this one."

"Take your own time, Mr. Byrne," said Murray. "When the light you seek is ready to come to you, it will come."

"Yes; but I don't know where to look for it," said Byrne.

"It will come of its own accord."

Byrne shook his head. "Poor fellow! he's just a bit touched yet," he said to himself.

After a little more conversation, Gerald and Mr. Murray went. It

was arranged that Byrne should write and let them know when he was ready to see them again.

It was about a week later when they all met again by appointment.

"Has the light come yet?" was Murray's first question.

"If it has, it is only a tiny ray indeed," said Byrne. "Something like that of a farthing rushlight, liable to be blown out by the first puff of wind.

"In such cases as the one before us," resumed Byrne, when they were all seated, "it often happens that several abortive attempts have to be made before the proper channel for exploration is discovered. The plan which I am about to propose to you will, in all probability, prove an abortive one, and will result in some other effort in some other direction having ultimately to be made. The plan in question is, however, the only one I can think of at present which seems to possess the least degree of feasibility. Very few words will suffice to lay it before you." Mr. Byrne here paused to refresh himself from his daughter's smelling-bottle, which stood on the chimney-piece. Then he resumed: "In the course of my various reconnoitrings about the house of Max Jacoby, or rather Van Duren, as we ought now to call him, I discovered a card in one of the windows, on which were the words, 'Unfurnished Apartments to let.' From what I can make out, Van Duren occupies no more of the house than the basement and ground-floor, the two upper-floors being empty and to let, and having a private side-entrance of their own. Now, what I propose is, that I and my daughter shall go and take these empty apartments. Mr. Warburton here shall be my son for the time being. In that capacity he will be able to call upon me as often as he may think well to do so. By these means I shall become an inmate of Van Duren's house: he and I will be under one roof. Should there be anything to discover, I shall thus be more likely to discover it; should any clue develop itself by means of which this man's crime may be traced home to him, I shall be on the spot to follow it up. In any case, to get near the man seems the first thing to do: away from him we can do little or nothing."

"I think your idea a most admirable one," said Murray. "As you say, the first thing to do is to get near the man."

"Will it be essential that you should take your daughter into your confidence?" asked Gerald. "Will it be requisite that you should explain to her all your reasons for taking up your residence in Van Duren's house?"

"I have no secrets from Miriam," answered Byrne. "But you need be under no apprehensions on that score: Miriam can keep a secret as well as I can: she is no commonplace, talkative school-girl. Besides which, her presence and co-operation are essential to the scheme I have in view. Without her it would be impossible for me to

carry it out. What this scheme is in all its details, you will excuse me from explaining to you now. I have told you what the first step is to be. With your permission, and if you can place full confidence in me, we will leave the remaining steps to develop themselves in the natural course of events."

"You have our fullest confidence, Mr. Byrne," said Murray. "We leave you to conduct the case entirely as you may think best to do so."

Gerald, unperceived by Mr. Murray, passed a slip of paper into Byrne's hand, on which was pencilled these words: "Say nothing to M. about money matters. I will call to-morrow and arrange with you."

Murray and Gerald walked home together arm-in-arm. The former was in unusually high spirits. "Did I not tell you, Gerald, that a way would be found out of the difficulty before long?"

"We are not out of the wood yet, sir," said Gerald, drily.

"Certainly not; but we have got a glimpse of daylight. But I cannot hope that you will see with my eyes: I cannot hope that the faith that burns within me will more than faintly warm you."

Gerald walked with Murray as far as the corner of Ormond Square, and then stopped the first empty cab that passed him, and hurried back to Harley Street.

Murray did not go straight home, but wandered back to a favourite second-hand bookstall, where he was well known. His purchases, it is true, were never of a very extensive character, being always confined to the threepenny, or, at the most, to the sixpenny box. But he was a frequent visitor at the stall, and he always made a point of turning over the entire contents of the box before making up his mind which particular treasure he would ultimately choose as his own. On the present occasion, after half an hour's diligent search, he decided on the extravagance of a double purchase. He bought "Althazar," an Arabian romance, for which he paid sixpence; and a "Treatise on Conic Sections," for which he paid threepence. This done, he walked quietly home, hugging his treasures under his arm, and promising himself a good long read that very evening, in either one volume or the other—it did not matter in the least which.

Mr. Murray's small stock of books, all selected from the same receptacle as his present purchases, was indeed a somewhat multifarious one. Nothing modern, nothing frivolous, was to be found there. They were all books that had seen service in their time, and the authors of which were not only dead but forgotten. "Musings in a Churchyard," and "Travels in Africa in 1755," jostled each other on the same shelf. "A Treatise on the Steam Engine" had heaped atop of it, as though there were some danger of an explosion, "An Essay on the Measurements and Construction of the Great Pyramid,"

and a thin volume of elegiac verse "by Mary M.," whoever she may have been.

It was characteristic of Mr. Murray that he seemed to like any one of these books as well as another. From each and all of them he seemed to derive either amusement or information, or perhaps both. And then he was one of those rare readers who will read the same book contentedly five or six times over. If he happened to be wakeful in the night, he would light his candle and pick up the treatise on Steam Engines, if that happened to come first to his hand, and read himself quietly to sleep again over matter that he had probably perused attentively only some three or four days before.

He had not been at home more than five minutes to-day, when he heard a clatter of little feet on the stairs, and then came a knocking at his door, followed by a request that "Uncle Greaves" would go down into the garden and turn Alice's skipping-rope. So down he went, and turned the skipping-rope dutifully for half an hour. Then came a whisper from Frank, who was on thorns to know how the big kite was getting on that Uncle Greaves had promised to make for him. It was getting on famously, he was told. "And will it really be as big as me?" asked Frank, eagerly. "Bigger—ever so much bigger," was the blissful answer. Then, with a troubled face, up came little Will. His waggon and horses had somehow come to grief: would Uncle Greaves try to mend them? Uncle Greaves would try to mend them, and would not only do that, but would give Dobbin a new coat of paint, and make an altogether superior animal of him.

When the afternoon grew dusk and chilly, and tea-time was at hand, they would not let their darling uncle go till they had kissed him all round; and little blue-eyed Kitty, out of sheer love, slipped her old sawdust doll into his tail-pocket, and so made him a present of her dearest worldly possession.

"Take that card out of the window," said Mr. Van Duren, a few afternoons later, to his clerk, Pringle.

"Rooms let at last?" asked Pringle.

"Yes; at last."

"To ancient, deaf old party and young lady, I suppose," muttered Pringle to himself, as he removed the card from the window. "Make this dead-alive hole a bit more lively, maybe. It needs it bad enough."

A strange thing happened to Max Van Duren that night. It was nearly midnight when he let himself in with his latch-key. His housekeeper had gone to bed long ago, and all was dark and silent. He lighted his bed-candle and tramped slowly upstairs to his own room. He had put his candle on the dressing-table, and was proceeding to divest himself of his cravat, when, happening to glance into the large oval glass in

front of which he was standing, he was startled to see there the reflection of another face beside his own. It was peering over his shoulder, and its eyes met his in the glass. Black and full of menace, or it might be of warning, were those eyes; and but for them, the face, with its thin line of black moustache, would have looked like that of a corpse, so death-like was its pallor.

Involuntarily Van Duren wheeled quickly round; but he was alone in the room. Involuntarily his eyes travelled back to the glass; but there was only the reflection of his own white face to be seen there now. He staggered back and sat down in the nearest chair. But he was a man of very powerful nerve, and it did not take him long to recover himself. Presently he rose and crossed the room to a little cupboard. From this he drew a bottle of some cordial, out of which he poured a few drops into some water, and then drank the mixture. There was a writing-table near the fire: when he was restless of a night, and could not sleep, he would often get up and work for an hour or two. At this table he now sat down, and drawing from a secret drawer a book of private memoranda, he proceeded to make the following entry in it, having first written down the day, month, and year of the occurrence:

"At five minutes before twelve to-night I saw once again, and for the fourth time in my life, the Face in the Glass. It is some years since I saw it last, and I had begun to flatter myself that I should never see it again. Never have I seen it except as an omen of ill to follow. The first time it appeared to me was a few hours before I set foot on board the cursed *Albatross*. The second time was the night before Katrinka tried to poison me, and all but succeeded. The third time was just before I heard the news of the great smash at Amsterdam, by which I lost half my fortune. Always as a presage of quick-following misfortune has that face appeared to me. And always *his* face! I shall dream of this for a month to come, and wake up every night shivering with horror. But what is the misfortune that is about to overtake me now? Vain question! Never did the horizon look fairer to me than it does at the present moment. Not the faintest cloud or sign of tempest anywhere visible. And yet, that something is about to happen—that some great crisis of my life is near at hand—I feel but too well assured. If only I knew where to look—if only I knew what to expect! But I am like a man who is condemned to fight a phantom in the dark.

"To-day I let my empty rooms to a deaf old gentleman and his daughter. What a bewitching creature the daughter is! Were I only twenty years younger, I know not into what folly I might be led by the sorcery of a face like hers."

(*To be continued.*)

THE KEY OF THE CHURCH.

"JOHNNY, you will have to take the organ on Sunday."

The words gave me a surprise. "I take the organ, good mother! What's that for?"

"Because I was to have taken it, Johnny, and this accident to my finger will prevent it."

Tod and I had just got home for the Michaelmas holidays. Not a week of them: for this was Wednesday afternoon, and we should go back the following Monday. Mrs. Todhetley had cut her finger very seriously in carving some cold beef on the previous day, and old Duffham had put it into splints.

"Where's Mr. Richards?" I asked—alluding to the church organist.

"Well, it is rather a long tale, Johnny. A good deal of dissatisfaction has existed, as you know, between him and the congregation."

"Through his loud playing."

"Just so. And he has resigned in a huff."

"I am out of practice."

"There's plenty of time to get up your practice between now and Sunday. Don't make objections, my dear. We should all do what little we can to help others in a time of need."

I said no more. And, not to lose time, went off to practise there and then.

The church stood in a lonely spot, and I took the way across the fields to it. Whistling softly as I went, and fixing in my own mind upon the chants and hymns.

"Let me see. For the morning we will have the thirty-seventh psalm, 'Depend on God:' there's real music in that; and 'Jerusalem the Golden.' In the afternoon 'Abide with me' and the Evening Hymn. Mornington's Chant; and the Grand Chant; and the —— Halloa, Fred! Is it you?"

A lithe, straight-limbed young fellow was turning out of the little valley. It was Fred Westerbrook: old Westerbrook's nephew at the Narrow Dyke Farm—or as we abbreviated it, the N. D. Farm.

"How are you, Johnny?"

I shook hands, and asked after Mr. and Mrs. Westerbrook.

"They are both well, for aught I know," he answered. "The N. D. Farm is no longer my home, Johnny."

Had he told me Dyke Manor was no longer mine, I could not have been more surprised. "Why, how is that, Fred?"

"They have turned me out of it. Two months ago."

"And why? I never thought it would come to that."

"Because they wanted to get rid of me; that's why. Gisby has been the prime mover in it—the chief snake in the grass. He is worse than she is."

"And what are you doing?"

"Nothing: except knocking about. I'd be off to America to-morrow and try my luck there if I had a fifty-pound note in my pocket. I went up to the Farm last week and made an appeal to my uncle to help me to it, and be rid of me ——"

"And would he?" I interrupted, too eager to let him finish.

"*Would he!*" repeated Fred, savagely. "He bade me go to a place unmentionable. He threatened to drive me off the premises if ever I put foot on them again."

"I am very sorry. What shall you do?"

"Heaven knows. Turn poacher, perhaps."

"Nonsense, Fred!"

"*Is* it nonsense!" he retorted, taking off his low-crowned hat and passing his hand passionately over his wavy, auburn hair—about the nicest hair I ever saw. People said Fred was proud of it. But he was a good-looking young fellow altogether; with a clear, fresh face, and steady grey eyes.

"I can tell you, Johnny, I am ripe for any mischief. A man must live. But for one thing, I swear I'd not keep straight."

I knew the thing he meant. "What does she say about it, Fred?"

"What can she say? I have been up there now, sitting for half an hour with her in the old study. There was no opportunity for a private word, though; the young ones were dodging around, playing at 'Salt Fish'—if you know the delectable game. Good-bye, Johnny, lad."

He strode off, with an angry fire in his eye. I was very sorry for him. We all liked Fred Westerbrook. He had his faults, I suppose, but he was one of the most open-natured fellows in the world.

Dashing in at Clerk Bumford's for the key of the church, I sat down to the organ: an antiquated instrument, whose bellows were worked by the feet, as are the modern harmoniums.

The N. D. Farm stood about three-quarters of a mile on the other side the church. Up to fifty years of age, its owner, Mr. Westerbrook, had not married. His dead brother's son had been adopted by him. Fred had lived there as the son and heir, and been made much of. When Mr. Westerbrook was fifty, he took and married; which was thought to be a regular foolish act, and the parish talked freely about it. She was a widow without children, of a grasping nature, and not at all nice in temper. A high-spirited boy, as Fred was—he was fourteen then—was sure not to get on with her. She interfered with him and thwarted him and told sneaking tales of him to his uncle. It went on pretty smoothly, however, until Fred left school, which he did at eighteen,

to take up his abode at home for good and busy himself about the farm. But Mrs. Westerbrook went on disliking him more than ever. Upon the death of the bailiff, some three or four years after, she sent for one Gisby, from a distance, and got Mr. Westerbrook to instal him in the bailiff's vacant place. This Gisby was a dark little man of middle age, said to be distantly related to her. He proved to be an excellent farmer and manager, and did his duty well: but from the first he and Fred were just at daggers-drawn. Presuming upon his relationship to the mistress, Gisby treated Fred in an off-hand manner, telling him sometimes to do this and not to do the other, as he did the men. Of course, Fred did not stand that, and offered to pitch him into next week unless he kept his place. But, as the years went on, the antagonism against Fred penetrated to Mr. Westerbrook. It was Gisby who first told Mr. Westerbrook of the intimacy, or friendship, or whatever you may please to call it, though I suppose the right word would be *love*, between Fred and Edna Blake. Edna was one of a large family, and had come, a year or two ago, to live at the Parsonage, being niece to Mrs. Holland, the parson's wife. Mrs. Holland was generally ill (and frightfully incapable), and Edna had it all on her hands: the housekeeping, and the six unruly children, and the teaching, and the mending, and often the cooking. They paid her twenty pounds a year for it. But she was a charming girl, with one of the sweetest faces ever seen, and the gentlest spirit. Fred Westerbrook had found that out, and the two were in love with one another. Old Mr. Westerbrook went into one of his passions when he heard of it, and swore at Fred. Edna was not his equal, he told him; Fred must look higher: she had no money, and her friends, as was reported, were but tradespeople. Fred retorted that Edna was a mine of wealth and goodness in herself, and he had never troubled himself to ask what her friends might be. And this appeared to be the end of it all; the turning him out of house and home. He was just twenty-four now. I don't wish to imply that Fred was without faults, or that he did nothing to provoke his uncle. He had been wild the last year or two, and tumbled into some scrapes.

Making short work of my playing, I took the key back to Bumford's, and ran home. Tod was in the dining-room with the mother, and I told them of the meeting with Fred Westerbrook. Mrs Todhetley seemed to know all about it, and said Fred had been living at the Silver Bear.

"What an awful shame of old Westerbrook!" broke out Tod.

"I am afraid there are faults on both sides," sighed Mrs. Todhetley, in her gentle way. "Fred has not borne a good character of late."

"And who could expect him to bear a good one?" fired Tod. "If I were turned out like a dog, would I care what I did? No. I'd go in for all that's bad. As to Gisby, the sneak, hanging would be too good for him."

"Don't, Joseph."

"*Don't!*" retorted Tod. "But I do. She wants old Westerbrook to leave the property to her; that's the beginning and the end of it; and to cut off poor Fred with a shilling."

"Of course we are all sorry for Fred, Joseph," resumed the mother. "But he need not do reckless things and lose his good name."

"Bother his good name!" cried Tod.

"It is a hopeless case, I fear, Joseph. Fred has been all on the wrong track lately, and done many a sad thing."

"I don't care what he has done. He has been driven to it. And I'll stand up for him through thick and thin."

Tod flung out of the room with the last words. It was just like him, putting himself into a way for nothing. It was like somebody else too —his father.

A fine commotion arose next morning. We were at breakfast, when Thomas came in to say old Jones, the constable, wanted to see the Squire immediately. Old Jones was bade to enter; he appeared all on the shake, and his face as white as a sheet. There had been murder done in the night, he said. Master Fred Westerbrook had shot Gisby: and he had come to get a warrant signed for Fred's apprehension.

"Goodness bless me!" cried the Squire, letting fall his knife and fork, and turning to face old Jones. "How on earth did it happen?"

"Well, your worship, 'twere a poaching affray," returned Jones. "Gisby the bailiff have had his suspicions o' the game, and he went out last night with a man or two, and met the fellows in the open field on this side the copse. There they was, in the bright moonlight, as bold as brass, with a bag o' game, Master Fred Westerbrook the foremost on 'em. A fight ensued—Gisby don't want for pluck, he don't, though he be undersized, and he attacked 'em. Master Fred up with his gun and shot him."

"Is Gisby dead?"

"No, sir, but he's a-dying."

"What a fool that Fred Westerbrook must be!" stormed the Squire, getting up and stamping a bit. "And I declare I liked the young fellow like anything! It was only last night, Jones, that we were talking of him here, taking his part against his uncle."

"He haven't been after much good, Squire, since he went to live at that there Silver Bear. Not but what the inn's as respectable——"

"Respectable!—I should like to know where you would find a more respectable inn, or a better conducted!" put in Tod, all in a heat and with scant ceremony. "What do you mean, old Jones? A gentleman can take up his abode at the Silver Bear, and not be ashamed of it."

"I've nothing to say again it, sir; nor against Rimmer neither. It warn't the inn I was a-reflecting on, but on Master Fred himself."

"Any way, I don't believe this tale, Jones."

"Not believe it!" returned Jones, aghast at the bold assertion. "Why, young Mr. Todhetley, the whole parish is a-ringing with it. There's Gisby a-dying at Shepherd's—the place he were carried to; and Shepherd himself saw young Mr. Fred fire off the gun."

"What became of the rascally poachers?" asked the Squire.

"They got clean off, sir, every one on 'em. And they couldn't be recognised, for they had blackened their faces. Master Fred was the only one who'd not disguised hisself; which was just like his boldness."

There was not much more breakfast for us. Tod rushed off, and I after him. The particulars appeared to be as old Jones had related. Gisby, taking Shepherd—who was the herdsman on the N. D. Farm—with him, and another man named Ford, had gone out to watch for poachers; had met half a dozen of them, including Fred Westerbrook, and Fred had shot Gisby.

The Silver Bear stood in the middle of Church Dykely, next door to Perkins the butcher's. It was kept by Henry Rimmer. We made for it, wondering whether Rimmer could tell us anything. He was in the tap-room, polishing the taps.

"Oh, it's true enough, young gentlemen," he said, as we burst in upon him with the question. "And a dreadful thing it is. One can't help pitying young Mr. Westerbrook."

"Look here, Rimmer. Do you believe he did it?"

"Why, in course he did, Master Johnny. There was no difficulty in knowing him: he was the only one of 'em not disguised. Shepherd says the night was as light as day. Mr. Fred had his supper here, and went out after it."

"Did he come in later?" asked Tod.

"No, never," replied Rimmer, lowering his voice, as a man sometimes does when speaking very seriously. "He never came in again."

"Where can he be hiding himself?"

"He's safe inside the place of one or other of the poachers, I should say," nodded the landlord. "Not that it would be safe for him or for them, if it could be found out who the villains were. I think I could give a guess at two or three of them."

"So could I," said Tod. "Dick Standish was one, I know. And Jelf another. Of course, their haunts will be searched. Don't you think, Rimmer, Mr. Fred Westerbrook would rather make off, than run the risk of concealing himself in any one of them?"

Rimmer shook his head. "I don't know about that, sir. He might not be able to make off. It's thought he was wounded."

"Wounded!"

"Gisby fired his own gun in the act of falling, and Shepherd thinks the charge hit young Mr. Westerbrook. The poachers were running off then, and Shepherd saw them halt in a kind of heap, like, and he is positive that the one on the ground was Mr. Westerbrook. For that

reason, sir, I should say the chances are he is somewhere in the neighbourhood."

Of course it looked like it. Strolling away to pick up anything else that people might be saying, we gave Fred our best wishes for his escape—in spite of the shot—and for effectually dodging old Jones and the rest of the Philistines.

By the afternoon, great staring hand-bills were posted about, written in enormous text-hand, offering a reward of £20 for the apprehension of Frederick Westerbrook. When old Westerbrook was incensed, he went in for the whole thing, and no mistake.

What with the bustle the place was in, and the excitement of the chase—for all the hedges and ditches, the barns and the suspected houses, were being looked up by old Jones and a zealous crowd, anxious for the reward—it was not until after dinner that I got away to practise. Going along, I met Duffham, and asked after Gisby.

"I am on my way to Shepherd's now," he answered. "I suppose he is still alive, as they have not sent me word to the contrary."

"Is he sure to die, Mr. Duffham?"

"I fear so, Johnny. I don't see much chance of saving him."

"What a dreadful thing for Fred Westerbrook! They may bring it in wilful murder."

"That they will be sure to do. Good-evening, lad."

Bumford was probably looking out for the fugitive (and the reward) on his own score, as he was not to be seen; but I found the key inside the knife-box on the kitchen dresser, his store-place for it, opened the door, and went into the church.

On one side the church-door, as you entered, was an enclosed place underneath the belfry, that did for the vestry and for Clerk Bumford's den. He kept his store of candles in it, his gravedigging tools; for he was sexton as well as clerk; his Sunday black gown, and other choice articles. On the other side of the door, not enclosed, was the nook that contained the organ. I sat down at once. But I had come too late; for in half an hour's time, the notes of the music and the keys were alike dim. Just then Bumford entered.

"Oh, you be here, be you," said he, treating me, as he did the rest of the world, with scanty ceremony. "I thought I heered the organ a-going, so I come on to see."

"You were not indoors, Bumford, when I called for the key."

"I were only in the field at the back, a-getting up some dandelion roots," returned old Bumford, in his usual grumbling tone. "There ain't no obligation in me to be at home everlasting."

"Who said there was?"

"Ain't it a'most too dark for you?"

"Yes; I shall have to borrow one of your candles."

Bumford grunted at this. The candles were not strictly his; they

were paid for by the parish; but he set great store by them, and would have denied me one if he could. Not seeing his way clear to do this, he turned away, muttering to himself. I took my fingers off the keys —for I had been playing while I talked to him—and followed. Bumford went out of the church, shutting the door with a bang, and I proceeded to search for the candlestick.

That was soon found: it always stood on the shelf: but it had no candle in it, and I opened the candle-box to take one out. All the light that came in was from the open slits in the belfry above. The next thing was to find the matches.

Groping about quietly with my hands on the shelf, for fear of knocking down some article or another, and wondering where on earth the match-box had gone to, I was startled by a groan. A loud, dismal groan, coming from the middle of the church.

It nearly made me start out of my skin. My shirt-sleeves went damp. The ghosts of the buried dead are popularly supposed to haunt the churches at night, down with us.

"It must have been the pulpit creaking," said I, gravely to myself. "Oh, here's the match ——"

An awful groan! Another! Three groans altogether. I stood as still as death; calling up the recollection that God was with me inside the church as well as out of it. Frightened I was, and it is of no use to deny it.

"I wonder what the devil is to be the ending of this?"

The unorthodox words brought a reassurance; for dead people don't talk, let alone their natural objection (as one must suppose) to mention the arch-enemy. The tones were free and distinct; and —— I knew them for Fred Westerbrook's.

"Fred, is that you?" I asked in a whisper, as I went forward.

No sound; no answer.

"Fred! It's only I."

Not a word or a breath. I struck a match, and lighted a candle.

"You need not be afraid, Fred. Come along. I'll do anything I can for you. Don't you know me?—Johnny Ludlow."

"For the love of heaven put that light out, Johnny!" he said, feeling it perhaps useless to hold out, or else deciding to trust me, as he came down the aisle in a stooping position, so that the pews might hide him from the windows. And I put it out.

"I thought you had gone out of the church with old Bumford," said he. "I heard you both come away from the organ, and then the door was banged, leaving the church to silence."

"I was searching after the candle and matches. When did you come here, Fred? How did you get in?"

"I got in last night. Is there much of a row, Johnny?"

"Pretty well. How came you to do it?"

"To do what?"

"Shoot Gisby."

"It was not I who shot him."

"Not you!"

"Certainly not."

"But—people are saying it was you. You were with the poachers."

"I was with the poachers; and one of them, like the confounded idiot that he was, pointed his gun, and fired it. I recognised the cry of pain for Gisby's, and knew that the charge must have struck him. I never had a gun in my hand at all, Johnny."

Well, I felt thankful for that. We sat down on the bench, and Fred told his tale.

After supper the previous night, he strolled out and met some fellow he knew, who lived two or three miles away. (A black sheep in the public estimation, like himself.) It was a beautiful night. Fred chose to see him home, and stayed there, drinking a glass or two, till he knew not what hour. Coming back across the fields, he fell in with the poachers. Instead of denouncing them, he told them, half in joke, half in earnest, that he might be joining their band himself before the winter was over. Close upon that, they fell in with the watchers, Gisby and the rest. Fred knew he was recognised, for Gisby called out his name; and, that, Fred did not like: it made things look black against him. Gisby attacked them; a scuffle ensued, and one of the poachers used his gun. Then the poachers turned to run, Fred with them; a shot was fired after them and hit one of their body—but not Fred, as Rimmer had supposed. The man tripped as the shot struck him, and caused Fred to trip and fall; but both were up and off the next moment. Where the rest escaped to, Fred did not know; chance led him past the church: on the spur of the moment he entered it for refuge, and had been there ever since.

"And it is a great and good thing you did enter it, Fred," I said, eagerly. "Gisby swears it was you that shot him, and he is dying; and Shepherd swears it too."

"Gisby dying?"

"He is. I met Duffham as I came here. They have posted handbills up, offering a reward of twenty pounds for your apprehension, Fred; and—and I am afraid, and so is Duffham, that they will try you for wilful murder. The whole neighbourhood is being searched for you for miles round."

"Pleasant!" said Fred, after a brief silence. "I had meant to go out to-night and endeavour to ascertain how the land lay. Of course I knew that what could be put upon my back would be put; and there's no denying that I was with the poachers. But I did not think matters would be as bad as this. Hang it all!"

"But, Fred, how did you get in here?"

"We hear talk of providential occurrences: there's nothing Mr. Holland is fonder of telling us about in his sermons than the guiding finger of God. If the means that enabled me to take refuge here were not providential, Johnny, I must say they look like it. When I met you yesterday afternoon, you remember my chancing to say that the little Hollands were playing at 'Salt Fish' in the study, while I sat there talking to Edna?"

Of course I remembered it.

"Directly after I left you, Johnny," resumed Fred Westerbrook, "I put my hand in my tail coat-pocket for my handkerchief, and found a large key there. It was the key of the church, that the children had been hiding at their play; and I understood in a moment that Charley, whose turn it was to hide last, had made a hiding-place of my pocket. The parson keeps one key, you know, and Bumford the other ——"

"But, Fred," I interrupted, the question striking me, "how came the young ones to let you come away with it?"

"Because their attention was diverted to something else, I expect. Ann brought in the tea-things, with a huge plate of bread-and-treacle: they screamed out with delight at the sight, and scuffled to get seats round the table. Well, I let the key lie in my pocket," went on Fred, "intending to take it back to-day. In the night, when flying from pursuit, not knowing who, or how many, might be after me, I felt this heavy key strike against me continually: and, in nearing the church, the thought flashed over me like an inspiration: What if I open it and hide myself there? Just as young Charley had hidden the key in my pocket, so I hid myself, by its means, in the church."

Taking a minute to think over what he said, it did seem strange. One of those curious things one can hardly account for; the means for his preservation were so simply natural and yet almost marvellous. Perhaps the church was the only building where he could have found secure refuge. Private dwellings would refuse to shelter him, and other places were sure to be searched.

"You are safe here, Fred. Nobody would ever think of seeking you here."

"Safe, yes; but for how long? I can't live without food for ever, Johnny. As it is, I have eaten none since last night."

My goodness! A shock of remorse came over me. When I was at old Bumford's knife-box, a loaf of bread stood on the dresser. If I had but secured it!

"We must manage to bring you something in, Fred," I said, as he took the key from his pocket, and balanced it on his finger.

"Yes; you have served me in good need," he said to the key. "I shall turn out for a stroll during some quiet hour of the night, Johnny.

To keep my restless legs curbed indoors for a whole day and night would be quite beyond their philosophy."

"Well, take care of yourself if you do. There's not a soul in the place but is all agape for the reward; and I daresay they will look for you by night more than by day. How about getting you in something to eat?"

"*I* don't know," he answered. "It would never do for you to be seen coming in here at night."

I knew that. Old Bumford would be down on me, if nobody else was. I sat turning over possibilities in my mind.

"I will come in betimes to-morrow morning under the plea of practising, Fred, and bring what I can. You must do battle with your hunger until then."

"I suppose I must. Mind you lock the door when you come in, or old Bumford might pounce upon us. When I heard you unlock it on coming in this evening, I can tell you I shivered in my shoes. Fate is very hard," he added, after a pause.

"Fate is?"

"Why, yes. I have been a bit wild lately, perhaps; savage too; but I declare before Heaven that I have committed no crime, and did not mean to commit any. And now to have this serious thing fastened upon my back! The world will say I have gone straight over to Satan."

I did not see how he would get it off his back, either. Wishing him good-night and a good heart, I locked him safely in, and crossed the graveyard to old Bumford's in the moonlight. He was seated at his round table at supper: bread and cheese and beer.

"Oh, Mr. Bumford, as I have to come into the church very early in the morning, or I shall never get my music up for Sunday, I will take the key home with me. Good-night."

He shouted out a dozen denials: How dared I think o' taking the key out of his custody? But I was deaf, and left him shouting.

"What a long practice you have been taking, Johnny!" cried Mrs. Todhetley. "And how hot you look. You must have run fast."

The Squire turned round from his arm-chair. "You've been joining in the hunt after that scamp, Mr. Johnny;—you've not been in the church, sir, all this while. I hear there's a fine pack out, scouring the hedges and the ditches."

"I got a candle from old Bumford's den," said I, evasively. And presently I contrived to whisper to Tod to come outside. Standing against the wall of the pigeon-house, I told him all. For once in his life, Tod was astonished.

"What a stunning thing!" he exclaimed. "Good luck, Fred! We'll help you. I knew he was innocent. Food? Yes, of course, we must get it for him, Johnny. Molly? Molly be shot!"

"Well, you know what Molly is, Tod. Let half a grain of sus-

picion arise, and it might betray him. If she saw us rifling her larder, she would go straight to the Squire; and what excuse should we make?"

"Look here, Johnny. I'll go out fishing to-morrow, you understand, and order her to make a lot of meat pasties."

"But we must get him something to-morrow morning, Tod: he might die of hunger else before night."

We stole round to the kitchen. The supper was over, but the servants were still at the table; no chance of getting to the larder then. Molly was in one of her tempers, apparently blowing up Thomas. There might be more chance in the morning.

Tod was up as soon as I was, and down we went. Not a servant was yet astir. Tod laid hold of a great tray, lodged it on the larder floor, and began putting some things upon it—a cold leg of mutton and a big round loaf.

"I can't take in all *that*, Tod. It is daylight, you know, and eyes may be about: old Bumford's are sure to be. I can only take in what I can conceal in my pockets."

"Oh, bother, Johnny! You'd half famish him."

"Better half famish him than betray him. Some slices of bread and meat will be the best—thick sandwiches, you know."

We soon cut into the mutton and the bread. Wrapping them in paper, I stowed the thick slices away in my pockets, leaving the rest of the loaf and meat on the shelves again.

"How I wish I could smuggle him in a bottle of beer!"

"And so you can, Johnny. Swear to old Bumford it is for your own drinking."

"He would know better."

"Wrap a sheet of music round the bottle, then. He could make nothing of that."

Hunting out a bottle, we went down to the cellar. Tod began to fill it from the tap. I stood watching the process.

"I've caught you, Master Johnny, have I! What be you about there, letting the ale run, I'd like to know?"

The words were Molly's. She had come down and found us out. Tod rose up.

"I am drawing some beer to take out with me. Is it any business of yours? When it is, you may interfere."

I was nobody in the household—never turning upon them. Tod was altogether different. He held his own authority, even with Molly. She went up the cellar stairs, grumbling to herself.

"I want a cork for this bottle," said bold Tod, following her. And Molly, opening some receptacle of hers, perforce found him one.

"Oh, and I shall want some meat pasties made to-day, for I think of going fishing," went on Tod. "Let them be ready by dinner time.

I have cut myself some slices of meat for now—if you chance to miss any mutton."

Molly, never answering, left her kitchen-grate, where she was beginning to crack up the huge flat piece of coal that the fire had been raked with the previous night, and stalked into the larder to see what depredations had been done. We tied up the bottle in paper on the parlour table, and then wrapped it in a sheet of loose music. It looked a pretty thick roll; but nobody would be likely to remark that.

"I have a great mind to go with you and see him, Johnny!" said Tod, as we went together down the garden path.

"Oh, don't, Tod! For goodness sake, don't! You know you never do go in with me, and it might cause old Bumford to wonder."

"I'll leave it till after dark to-night, then. Go in, I shall."

Bumford was astir, but not down yet. I heard him coughing through his open casement; for I went with a purpose round the path by his house, and called out to him. He looked out in his shirt-sleeves and a cotton nightcap.

"You see how early I am, this morning! I'll bring you the key when I leave."

"Eugh!" growled Bumford. "No rights to ha' took it."

Locking the church door securely after me, I went along the aisle, calling softly to Fred. He came forward from a dark, high-walled pew, behind a pillar, where he had slept. You should have seen him devour the bread and meat, if you'd like to know what hunger means, and drink at the bottle of beer. I sat down to practise. Had old Bumford not heard the sound of the organ, he might have come thundering at the door, to know what I was about, and what the silence meant. Fred came with me, and we talked while I played. About the first question he asked was whether Gisby was dead; but I could not tell him. He said he had gone out cautiously in the night and walked about the churchyard for an hour, thinking over what he could do. "And I really had an unpleasant adventure, Johnny," he added.

"What was it?"

"I was pacing the path under the hedge towards Bumford's, when all at once there arose the sound of voices and steps on the other side of it—fellows on the look out after me, I suppose."

I held my breath. "What did you do?"

"Crouched down as well as I could—fortunately the hedge is high—and came softly and swiftly over the grass and the graves to the porch. I only slipped inside just in time: before I could close the door, the men were in the churchyard. The key has a trick of creaking harshly when turned in the lock, you know; and I declare I thought they must have heard it then, for it made a fearful noise, and the night was very still!"

"And they did not hear it?"

"I suppose not. But it was some minutes, I can tell you, before my pulses were at all at their ordinary rate of beating."

He went on to say that the only plan he could think of was to endeavour to get away, and go out of the country. To stand his trial was not to be thought of. His word, that he had not been the guilty man, had never even had a gun in his hand that night, would go for nothing, against Gisby's word and Shepherd's. Whatever came of it, he would have to be out of the church before Sunday. The great question was: how could he get away unseen? I told him Tod was coming with me at night, and we would consult together. Locking up the church again, and the prisoner in it, I gladdened Bumford's heart by handing over the key, and ran home to breakfast.

Life yet lingered in Gisby; but the doctors thought he could not live through the day. The injury he had received was chiefly internal, somewhere in the region of the lungs. Fresh parties went out to scour the country after Fred Westerbrook, with fresh ardour; and so the day passed. Chancing to meet Shepherd late in the afternoon, he told me Gisby still lived.

At sundown I went in to practise again, and took a big mould-candle with me, showing it to Bumford, that he might not be uneasy on the score of his stock in the vestry. As soon as dusk came on, and before the tell-tale moon was much up, I left the organ, opened the church-door, and stood at it, according to the plan concerted with Tod. He came swiftly up with his basket of provisions, which he had got together by degrees during the day; and then we locked the door again. After Fred had regaled himself, we consulted together. Fred was to steal out of the church about one o'clock on Sunday morning, and make off across the country. But, to do this in safety, it was necessary he should be disguised. By that time, perhaps, the ardour of the night-searching might have somewhat passed; and the hour, one o'clock in the morning, was as silent and lonely a one as could be expected. It was most essential that he should not be recognised by any person who might chance to meet him.

"But you must manage one thing for me," said Fred, after this was settled. "I will not go away without seeing Edna. She can come in here with you to-morrow night."

We both objected. "It will be very hazardous, Fred. Old Bumford would be sure to see her: his eyes are everywhere."

"Tell him you want her to sing over the chants with you, Johnny. Tell him anything. But, go away for an indefinite period, without first convincing her that it is not guilt that sends me, I will not."

So there was no more to be said.

The getting provisions together seemed to have been easy, compared with what we should have to get up now—a disguise. A smock-frock, say, and the other items of a day-labourer's apparel.

"Mack leaves belongings of his in the barn occasionally," said Tod to me, as we walked home together. "We'll look to-morrow night."

It was our best hope. Failing that, there would be no possibility of getting a smock-frock anywhere; and Fred would have to escape in his coat turned inside out, or something of that. His own trousers, hitched up, and plastered with mud at the feet, would do very well, and his own wide-awake hat, pulled low down on his face.

Saturday. And Tod and I with our work before us. Gisby was sinking fast. Late in the afternoon I went to the Parsonage. Fortune favoured me—as it seemed to have favoured us throughout. Edna Blake was alone in the schoolroom in her lilac print dress, looking over about a wheelbarrow-full of socks and stockings. Her large dark eyes looked as sad and big as the hole she was darning; and her voice had a hopeless ring in it.

"Oh, Johnny, how you startled me! Have—have you come to tell me anything?"

"Yes," I said, dropping my voice. "I have brought you a message from Fred Westerbrook."

Down went the socks in a heap. "Oh, Johnny!"

"Hush! No: he is not taken; he is in safe hiding. What's more, Edna, he is no more guilty than I am. He met the poachers accidentally that night just before the affray, and he never had a gun in his hands at all."

A prolonged, sobbing sigh, as if she were going to choke, and then a glad light in her eyes. She took up her work again. I went over to the seat next her, and told her all. She was darning all the while. With such a heap of mending the fingers must keep on.

"To America!" she repeated, in answer to what I said. "What is he going to do for money to carry him thither?"

"He talks of working his passage over. He has enough money about him, he says, to take him to the coast. Unfortunately, neither Tod nor I can help him in that respect. We have brought empty pockets from school, and shall get no money before the time of going back again. Will you go in and see him, Edna?"

"Yes," she said, after a minute's consideration. "I will bring a roll of music in my hand, as you suggest, Johnny, for the satisfaction of Clerk Bumford's curiosity. And I will be at the stile as near eight o'clock as I can, if you will come out there to meet me."

The dinner was later than usual that night; it struck half-past seven before we got out, having secured another bottle of beer. The moon was rising behind the trees as we went into the barn.

Tod struck a match, and we looked about. Yes, Fortune was with us still. Hanging on the shaft of the cart, was Mack's smock-frock.

It was anything but clean; but beggars can't be choosers. Next we descried a cotton neckerchief and a pair of boots, two clumsy, clod-hopping boots, with nails in the thick soles, and the outside leather not to be seen for patches.

"They must do," said Tod, with a rueful look. "But just look at the wretches, Johnny. I must smuggle these and the smock-frock into the church-porch, while you go round to old B.'s for the key."

"I have the key. I flung him a shilling this morning instead of the key, saying I might be wanting to practise ever so many tunes to-day, and would give it him back to-night."

Letting Tod into the church, I went to meet Edna Blake. She was already there, the roll of music in her hand. Bumford shot out of his house, and crossed our path.

"Good evening, Mr. Bumford!" said she, cheerily. "I am come to try the hymns for to-morrow, with Johnny Ludlow."

"They'd need to be sum'at extra, they had, with all this here fuss o' practising," returned Bumford. "Be the parson at home, Miss Blake?"

"Yes. He is in the little room, writing."

"'Cause I want to see him," said the clerk; and he stalked off.

"Do you know how Gisby is?" Edna asked me in a whisper.

"Dead by this time, I daresay. But I have not heard."

They were at the top of the church when we got in, laughing in covert tones: I guessed it was over those dreadful boots. Edna stood by me while I locked the door, and then we went at once to the organ and began the hymn. Old Bumford could not be too far off yet to catch the sounds. Later Fred Westerbrook and Edna paced the aisle arm-in-arm. I kept on playing; Tod, hardly knowing what to do with himself, whistled an accompaniment.

"How long shall I be away, Edna!" exclaimed Fred, in answer to her question. "Why, how can I tell? It may be for years: it may be for ever. I cannot come back, I suppose, while this thing is hanging over my head."

She was in very low spirits, and the tears began to drop from her eyes. "You may not succeed in getting away."

"No, I may not. And do you know, Edna, there are moments when I feel inclined not to attempt it, but to give myself up instead. If I do get away, and get on in the States, so as to make myself a home, will you come out and share it with me?"

"Yes," she answered.

"I may do it. I think I shall. Practical farmers get on well there if they choose, though they have to rough it at first. It may not be a luxurious home, neither may I make anything of a position. But if I get enough for comfort, you will come out to it?"

"I will," she said with a great sob.

"My darling!"

Echo bore the words to us, softly though they were spoken. I played a crashing chord or two, after the manner of Richards.

"You may not hear from me," continued Fred. "I must not give any clue to where I am, and therefore cannot write—at least, not at present. Men accused of murder can be fetched home from any part of the world. Only trust me, Edna. *Trust me!* though it be for years."

No fear but she would. She put a small packet in his hand.

"You *must* take it, Frederick. It is my last half year's salary—ten pounds—and I chance to have it by me: a loan, if you will; but take it you shall. It will be a little less miserable for me in knowing that you have a few pounds to help you away and to fall back upon."

"But, Edna ——"

"I declare I will throw it away if you do not take it," she returned, excitedly. "Do not be cruel to me, Frederick. If you knew how it will lighten my doubts and fears, you would not hesitate."

"Be it so, Edna. It will help me onwards. Truth to say, I did not see how I should have got along, even to the coast, unless I had begged on my way. It is a loan, Edna, and I will contrive to repay it as soon as may be."

So his boast of having money to take him to the coast had been all a sham. Poor Fred! They began to take leave of one another, Edna sobbing bitterly. I plunged into the Hallelujah Chorus.

Tod watched her safely across the churchyard. Then we locked the door again for the dressing-up, I playing a fugue between whiles. The first operation was that of cutting his hair short, for which we had brought the Mater's big scissors. No labourer would have Fred's beautiful hair, or wear it so long. Tod did it well; not counting a few notches; and left him none on his head.

It was impossible to help laughing when we took a final look at him in the rays of the moon, Fred turning himself about to be inspected: his hair, clipped nearly to the roots, suggesting a suspicion that he had just come out of prison; his trousers, not reaching to the ankle, showing off the heavy, patched, disreputable boots; the smock-frock; and Mack's spotted cotton neckerchief muffled round his chin!

"Your own mother wouldn't know you, Fred."

"What a figure I shall cut if I am dropped upon, and brought back!"

"Take heart, man!" cried Tod. "Resolve to get off, and you will get off."

"Yes, Fred! You have been *helped* hitherto, and I think you will be helped still."

"Thank you, Johnny. Thank you both. I *will* take heart. And if I live ever to return, I hope I shall thank you better."

Later we dared not stay; it was past nine now. I bade Fred good-bye, and God-speed.

"Between half past twelve and one, mind, will be your time; you'll hear the clock strike," was Tod's parting injunction, given in a whisper. "Good luck to you, old fellow! I hope and trust you'll dodge the enemy. And as soon as you are clear of the churchyard, make off as if the dickens were behind you."

We walked home in the moonlight, silent enough, Tod handing me the bundles to carry. The Squire attacked us, demanding whether we had stayed out to look at the moon.

And I tossed and turned on my restless bed till the morning hours, thinking of poor Fred Westerbrook, and of whether he would get away. When sleep at last came, it brought a very vivid dream. I thought he did *not* get away. He was unable to unlock the church-door. Whether Tod and I had double-locked it in leaving, I knew not; but Fred could not get it open. When Clerk Bumford entered the church in the morning, and the early comers of the congregation with him, there stood Fred, hopelessly waiting to be taken. I saw him as plainly in my dream as I had ever seen him in reality: with the dirty smock-frock, the patched boots, and the clipped hair. Shepherd, who seemed to follow me in, darted forward and seized him; and in the confusion I awoke. Just for a minute I thought it was true—a scene actually enacted. Would it prove so?

You will hear next month. The end and all.

JOHNNY LUDLOW.

SUNRISE ON THE SNOW.

A SILENT world, a shrouded earth,
A landscape fair and white,
O'er which the Fairy Frost had danced
In wayward mood all night.
She decked the land with sparkling gems,
She breathed upon the air;
Then laughed with joy the fairy sprite,
To see the world so fair.

The stars shone dim, the crescent moon
Seemed wishing to be gone;
Aurora ope'd the morning gates,
Pale goddess of the dawn.
Hark, hark! the chariot wheels of Sol
Are moving through the sky!
And Earth awoke and gazed around,
With sparkling, curious eye.

Sol rose with smiles, then stooped again,
The silent Earth to greet;
His ruby lips touched hers, and then
She blushed like roses sweet.
Half shy, half pleased, she bent her head,
And pouted, "All will know."
"Not they," said Sol; "they'll only think
'Twas sunrise on the snow."

Then mounting to his seat in haste,
As though he were full late;
He smiled on Earth, who rosy stood
Beneath the morning gate.
She felt his power, but tried in vain
To hide her cheeks' hot glow;
While folks deceived, the tale believed,
"'Twas sunrise on the snow."

A. E. G.

ABOUT DOGS.

IN all times of the world's history no animal has been so closely connected with the domestic life of men and women, both in romance and reality, as the dog. He trots at the side of Tobit and his Celestial friend on their way to woo the oft-won, oft-lost bride. He gives one pathetic touch the more to the most deeply interesting part of the Odyssey. He watches with the Troubadour by his lady's grave. Shakespeare grants him no mean place in his gallery, as the merry companion of Launce. And throughout all modern times, we find him figuring conspicuously in fiction, whether we look at the breathing mimic world which grew beneath the pen of Scott, or turn to the clumsy woodcuts which form too often the staple commodity in the novel of the present day. The horse is the companion of his master in the hour of glory. The steeds of Hector break with him in fierce triumph the Grecian lines. The famous charger of the Cid is there to help him to mow down the turbans of the infidel. But the dog is the companion of his master's most social and homely moments.

We cannot wonder at this as we look at his head; whether it be the head of the silken-coated, delicately-pawed toy reclining on velvet, or the head of the mongrel cur slinking after the travelling tinker's heels along the dusty road. There is intelligence and sympathy for those he loves in his eyes, keen perception and sensibility in his palpitating nostrils, and vigilant thought in his changeful ears, now joyfully pricked, now laid flat dejectedly. There are all these things to be found in his face, even when real beauty of form and purity of breed are wanting. We believe that there is not a dog in the world that would not excite our interest if we looked closely into his daily life and peculiarities. One dog will not eat his dinner except in a pet corner; a second will not touch a morsel till some little joke with regard to his food has been performed for the millionth time by one of his especial friends; a third goes to drink in a wary, suspicious way, as if he thought he was being watched by a deadly enemy; and a fourth holds it to be a matter of conscience never to touch the bone of a partridge, or a woodcock. These are a few of the daily fancies observable in the great canine family, even about so small a matter as their eating and drinking.

Dogs are quite as varied in their characters as are men. Among a hundred, even of the same breed, we do not find two exactly alike in disposition and habits. Under close inspection, their different specialities come out to view, as distinctly as do the spots on an insect's back beneath the lens of the microscope. To exemplify this our hypothesis

about the vast variety to be found in canine character, we will give a brief account of some few very interesting, but very different dogs, who have lived, and are in certain cases still living, beneath our own eye.

We will begin with Jarto,* who, although she does not hold a first place among our dogs for beauty or for high descent, nevertheless claims foremost mention for the originality of many of her ways and notions. Jarto came of vulgar, not to say rather disreputable parentage. Had she been a Hindoo maiden instead of a dog, she would have been looked upon as a Pariah, and have found some difficulty in getting a respectable husband. Her head is that of an otter-hound, and she is underhung, like a princess of the house of Hapsburg. Her long silky coat and ears suggest ideas of the spaniel: while her bandy legs and broad, strong paws are those of a terrier of the terriers. With these latter appendages she does good work for her mistress's poultry-yard, in the way of scratching for rats and weasels: but with all her active tastes in this respect, no useless dilettante *chien de luxe* was ever fonder of a cushion or a lady's knee.

Jarto is a dog of many regular appointed ceremonies. During the earlier part of dinner, she lies on the rug before the winter fire, or on the mat in the open window, where the summer breeze plays with her long hair as quietly as if there was not a bone or a slice of meat in the room. All at once, however, she starts up, bounds on to her master's lap, and sits there with a most complacent face, while he prepares for her some dainty in the way of a bit of pudding or cheese. What has been the cause of this sudden movement? Her name has not been called, or even mentioned: no whistle has roused her: it is merely that her master has drunk his second glass of beer. How she distinguishes the second glass from the first, or how, indeed, she knows that her friend drinks beer at all, is more than any human wit can tell. By her wonderful observant instinct, she has somehow found out for herself that the setting down of the empty glass for the second time is the signal that her master is ready for her, and she would rather lose one of her long ears than give up this well-loved custom. Another of her rules is that she will never go to bed without her prime minister the housemaid bearing before her her cushion in solemn state.

Jarto has two plays which have to be gone through regularly every evening before anyone is allowed to turn over the leaf of a book or move a needle. In the first, her master makes violent passes at her with his hand, as if he wanted to engage in angry combat with her. She answers with short, fierce little growls and snaps. By-and-by he lets her get hold of his fingers. What do the strong, white teeth do then? Why, they hold their prey as delicately as a lady's hand holds a piece of rare china. Her second amusement is not exactly one to any

* "Jarto" means in Gaelic "Little darling."

member of the party who may happen to be afflicted with a headache or weak nerves. Her mistress takes her on her lap, and begins to counterfeit the most extreme grief, sobbing and holding her handkerchief to her eyes. Hereupon Jarto stares into her mistress's face, and opening her mouth, sends forth a succession of howls, each one louder and more shrill than the last. She knows perfectly well that it is all make-believe, and that her mistress is no more in real sorrow than she is herself; but still she likes to make publicly known in this peculiar way, every evening, the sympathy that there is between them.

Jarto has one stock performance which she will exhibit over and over again, with the most unfailing gravity and self-satisfaction. Her mistress wraps round her a little scarlet cloak, puts on her head a twisted-up doyley, by way of a cap, and then sits her upright in the corner of an arm-chair. She is supposed to represent thus a monkey, and to say the truth, in this attire she looks well her part. The patient, but also somewhat vain little creature will stay in this constrained position for many minutes without moving a paw, if only everyone in the room will come and stand round and praise her.

Jarto's heart is as loving as her brain is quick. One day her master and mistress came home from a long journey. She was busy in the back yard with a rat, or some other important business, and so knew nothing of their arrival. By-and-by, however, she trotted into the study and found her master seated there. Her surprise and joy were most touching. The poor little animal was too much overpowered with both to run and jump upon his knee; she fell upon her back in a regular fit of glad sobbing and crying. It was as much an attack of hysterics as that of any fine lady; only we fear, if tried in the crucible of truth, the lady's hysterics would be found to be dross, and the doggie's real gold.

We will turn next to a little group of black-and-tan terriers. They have all shining black coats of different degrees of fineness; all paws varying in their tan from pale gold to deep orange, and all brown eyes full of meaning. Yet, though like in many points of outward appearance, their dispositions are very dissimilar.

First we will glance at James, the largest and least handsome of the trio. When he came, he was christened Jemmie; but there was soon found to be a sleek respectability about him which made the diminutive quite out of place, and so it was dropped. James was brought up in the house of an Independent minister, and throughout his life he has never quite lost the staid decorum of his early home. His gambols, when he indulges in any, are of the soberest kind; and when, for some small misdemeanor, he is told to go to his basket, he retires there and sits looking as meek as Moses. To say the truth, however, he is a little bit of a hypocrite. He will lie on the sunny doorstep with his eyes half-closed, as if he was thinking of a sermon,

and then all at once spring up to attack the legs of a tramp. He trots along, looking as demure as a beadle, but suddenly darts off after a rabbit. Yet with all this he has in him plenty of true, warm feeling. Indeed, we never knew a dog that had not—if he was well treated. Once, when his mistress went away, he would eat nothing for some days.

One of James's most marked peculiarities is his love for cats, whose society he prefers to that of his own dog relations. When his pussy friend is engaged with family cares, he never forgets to go every morning and put his head into the large box, which serves as her nursery, to ask how the babies do. As they grow older, the kittens sit with their paws around his neck, and play with his ears and tail: all of which familiarities he takes with evident pleasure. He is never more delighted than when one of his little companions shares with him his basket, nestling cosily between his front paws.

A very different dog from James, though also of the more solemn order of canine natures, was Sylph. Alas! that we must say "was"; our old favourite has passed away from among us. Her broad chest, her dignified way of trotting about, her high forehead, all told at once something of her character. Even from a pup, Sylph had a touch of the dowager about her. She could never endure to be laughed at; and any liberty, such as pulling her tail or twitching the corner of her bed, was received with a low growl, the tone of which had something uncomfortably earnest about it for the fingers of the offender. She was a dog who loved regular order to be kept in everything. She showed by her face that she took it as an insult to herself if the dinner-hour or hour for walking was changed. She was also very self-opinionated; and no one could persuade her that what she thought right was wrong. Twenty times she would return to the same forbidden chair, though twenty times she was ejected from it.

But with all her whimsical fancies, there never was a dog that more thoroughly felt for and sympathised with her human friends. She would never worry you when you were ill, with noisily-barked invitations to go out. If your face was grave and thoughtful, she would show by a soft touch of her nose or paw that she quite understood you, and would then sit down quietly by you and watch your movements. Once, when her mistress's eyes were bad, and a bandage was placed over them, she sprang up, and tried with piteous whines to raise her little paws to remove the unwonted disfigurement. Her last days were very sad for us all. Even now we can scarcely recall without a tear the poor little shrunk form creeping to our feet, to beg for the only solace she could now know—one slumber more on the dear familiar lap; the heaving breath and uneasy limbs, and the patient tail, which still would wag at the touch of a caressing hand; the last look of love and intelligence from those gentle eyes, as we stood—a little band of true

mourners—around the faithful companion that had shared our household joys and sorrows for fourteen years.

It is a bright, joyous little form which comes bounding in to dispel the shadow cast by those sad old memories. Of all our dogs, Mimie is the acknowledged queen of beauty. What easy grace there is in each movement of the round, symmetrical little body; what mingled pertness and gentleness in the expression of the tiny, delicately-chiselled head; what subtle elegance in the slender, snake-like neck, as it turns hither and thither in harmony with the long, mobile, ever-watchful velvet ears! The brown eyes sparkle, the orange paws twinkle, the slim tail whisks jauntily, as she comes dancing towards us over the flower-beds, scarce bending a petal as she goes. Yes, Mimie is a beauty; and we regret to say she knows it quite as well as any pretty girl in the country knows the same important fact. She is as thorough a coquette, in her way, as any belle that ever fluttered a fan. When a gentleman visitor enters the room, she begins by growling and barking furiously. As soon, however, as he sits down, all this ill-humour vanishes suddenly, like the steam from a cooling tea-urn. She springs upon his lap, and standing on her hind legs, begins to scratch his face vigorously with her fore paws. If truth must be told, she has caused some trouble of mind to certain of our guests by this strange proceeding, which she, however, apparently intends as a most civil attention. She once honoured with this doubtful compliment the reverend face of a bishop, who evidently deemed the scraping of those needle-like claws a great deal more unpleasant than the "tickling of the tithe-pig's tail," to which churchmen were subject in the days of Romeo; and by the same treatment she also considerably disconcerted a luckless gentleman who was more indebted for his glossy black whiskers to the hairdresser than to Mother Nature.

If the visitor receives her advances coldly, she soon leaves him, and trots away with a disgusted, scornful air. But if he is friendly and begins to admire her, she puts herself into a succession of the most affected attitudes conceivable: now looking up into his face with her head held languishingly on one side; now resting her paws on his arm that he may see their shape and colour; now nestling her muzzle inside his waistcoat.

With ladies her manners are quite different. The little monkey has learnt that their laps are the most delightful things in the world, and she will steal up to them, and touch gently a frill or a bow with her paw, in token that she wants to be raised to the owner's knee. If, however, the lady is a familiar friend, she will spring up without ceremony, and make herself at home.

Towards those with whom she always lives she has the prettiest and most caressing ways of any animal we ever knew. She loves to insinuate herself softly under your shawl on a cold day; and to lie with her

dainty little tan cheek resting in your hand; and to creep up on your pillow while you sleep, so that in the morning you find her curled up there like a ball of black satin.

In spite of her outwardly conceited manner, Mimie is, at bottom, the simplest, most trustful little creature possible. Anyone whom she loves can make her believe what he pleases; and she has such bold confidence in her mistress's affection, that if she brandishes a whip over her head she goes to play with the lash of it. Such childlike natures are precious even among dogs. Why will not the world let us find a few more of them among men and women?

Tiny is another of our old pets that deserves a few words on account of his marked character. He was the handsomest and highest bred of King Charlie spaniels, and for many years reigned supreme on the drawing-room hearth-rug. In manners and feelings he was exactly like a haughty French noble in the time of the Grand Monarque. When his mistress went into the kitchen to order dinner, he would stand at the door with a most contemptuous face, and never tread the lime and sand floor with his delicately-feathered paws. No dog in the neighbourhood could boast of his friendship, no stranger of a glance from him as he lay on his velvet cushion. He had only a condescending wag of the tail now and then for even his master and mistress. If ever there was a dog aristocrat, it was he.

A long dynasty of big Newfoundlands rise up in memory before us, welcoming our guests with civil barks, warning off tramps with ominous growls, guarding with jealous care the well-loved threshold. There was Sailor, who was so huge in girth and size of limb, that when he took the long journey which brought him to his new home, no dog-box on the Great Western Railway could be found large enough to hold him. He had therefore a second-class carriage assigned to him as a kennel, where he sat in solitary state, no one being exactly desirous of such a fellow-traveller. Yet, notwithstanding his formidable appearance, he was in reality the gentlest of living creatures except when his master's property was attacked. He was the playfellow-general of the village children, and the very babies delighted in being softly turned over by his great paws and caressed by his broad red tongue. When told to ask for his dinner, he would do it in a series of short, quick barks, which were so very like eager words, that you almost fancied you could interpret them into human language.

Besides this gigantic worthy, there was Lion, who once, when his master was struggling with considerable difficulty through a deep snow-drift on our hills, came back to his side and offered his strong neck to his arm to help him out.

There was Neptune the first, a queer-tempered, shifty fellow, who would sometimes growl even at his own friends, but who, strangely enough, could always be kept in perfect submission by the threat of a

jug of cold water being thrown over him. There is Neptune the second, a magnificently-made, sweet-tempered, soft-hearted gentleman who spends most of his time in idle slumber, but who, nevertheless, is sharp enough to know by the opening of the library window that his master is coming out, and to hide himself in the thickest part of the shrubbery when the time comes for him to be chained up.

Had we space, we could give a hundred other instances to prove our theory that the characters of dogs are as varied and as delicately shaded as those of men and women. Surely, creatures thus strongly marked by the Creator's hand should receive very gentle and thoughtful treatment from us, in whose power it lies to make the joy or sorrow of their brief, harmless lives. There are, we are glad to think, many people who live with their dogs as with familiar friends; but there are also many people who, almost unconsciously, perhaps, treat them inconsiderately and unkindly.

For instance, there are few things which strike us in a small way as more thoughtlessly cruel than the manner in which mothers (good, gentle-hearted women in other things) allow their children to tease a long-suffering dog. "The little darlings mean it all in play," they say, and sit calmly by, working or reading, while the unfortunate animal is being pulled and squeezed and pinched, as if it was a mere lifeless toy. We must confess that when we see a band of such little dears at a watering-place, dragging about an unlucky puppy, now through the waves, now over the shingles, we long—yes, we say it in the face of outraged mammas and nurses—we long to box their ears till our fingers tingle.

We are never more grieved and shocked than when we read the account of the treatment to which, in Canada, the dogs are subjected which drag in winter the sledges over the ice and frozen snow. These dogs materially help in maintaining the commercial prosperity of the colony. No other animal could do the work they do, and yet they are beaten and abused and ill-fed, and often left to die by the wayside of cold and starvation. Surely some law which would protect these useful four-footed British subjects, would be quite as much for the glory and profit of the nation as the laws which guard the game on a wealthy gentleman's estate, in order that he may have the pleasure of killing it.

A dog's requirements for happiness are very few and simple: give him moderate food, plenty of water, a good deal of exercise, and a comfortable bed, and he will be content, and more than content. We use the words "moderate food" with an emphasis, because we believe that in the matter of feeding, dogs are often really hurt by mistaken kindness. With all his many intelligent faculties, the dog seldom possesses that of knowing when to stop eating. If allowed to do so, he will cram himself daily until he becomes unwieldy in shape and inactive in habits, and until his life is prematurely shortened. True, he has his

days of abstinence, when he will not touch a morsel, and he has his own carefully gathered grass-medicine; but these antidotes are only partial against repletion. A good master or mistress will regulate a dog's diet so as to keep him in the best health of both mind and body.

A dog is, we think, neither happier nor better for being taught a number of set tricks. Such instruction must almost of necessity subject the dog to a certain amount of painful discipline, and his accomplishments must, after all, in a little while grow wearisome to his master. Leave him alone, and he will make for himself a hundred clever, funny little ways, which are far more interesting to watch than any stiff, trained performances. He should, however, be carefully educated in the matter of obedience. An unruly dog is a real calamity to his friends.

One of a dog's chief pleasures is that afforded him by his wonderful delicacy of scent. Each hedgerow, each ditch, each blade of grass, each stone, is to his inquiring nose as full of meaning as a Hebrew character is to the earnest eyes of a scholar. "Here passed by lately a rabbit. There couched last night a fox. In this bank lives a family of weasels: what fun it would be if I could scratch them out! Behind that brushwood sits a pheasant; perhaps I may put her up. The field we are crossing has lately had in it sheep and cows, which I would have barked at, had they still been here. And now, what a delightful discovery! we are on a path lately trodden by one of my master's most familiar friends, who always strokes me when we meet." Something like this must be the course of thought in a dog's brain while he is taking a simple country walk.

Dogs have always been the close friends and companions of distinguished men and women. Huge deer-hounds and wiry-haired Scotch terriers haunt the shades of Abbotsford almost as distinctly as the figure of their great master himself. The love between Professor Wilson and his canine pets forms one of the prettiest parts of the story of his life. How would poor Mary Mitford have got on without the sympathy and affection of her long succession of dog friends? These are only three instances out of innumerable examples in which we find dogs closely mixed up with the biography of those who are dear to all mankind.

Truthfulness is one of a dog's most marked attributes. He will never show affection where he does not feel it, never willingly stay in a place he dislikes. In this, as in many other points, dog-nature is a very beautiful nature. In all our pride of intellect we may perhaps learn something from our dogs.

ALICE KING.

THE DEBUT OF MADEMOISELLE AGATHE.

"NO," said Jules Laroche, swallowing the remainder of his matutinal cup of coffee, and buttoning his coat with the disengaged hand. "No; Agathe is quite right: Boquillard will never do." Having come to this conclusion, he gave his hat a final brush, lit a cigarette, and after carefully locking his outside door, leisurely descended the stairs of No. 23, Rue du Sentier, hung the key of his apartment on its particular hook in the porter's lodge, and sallied forth in the direction of the boulevard. As he emerged on that populous thoroughfare, he was accosted by a young man walking rapidly eastward, with a roll of paper under his arm.

"C'est toi, Jules!"

"Ernest! you're out early. Do you read your drama to-day?"

"Yes; at ten for a quarter past; and you?"

"Not for another couple of hours. Darbois has called the people for twelve, but Amanda is sure to be late."

"What! does she play in your piece?"

"Not if I can help it," replied Jules, with a significant shrug; "but she does pretty much as she likes at the Nonpareil, and if she chooses to take the part, I suppose she must. It's only a one-act thing, after all."

"Well, bonne chance," said Ernest. "You're not going my way?"

"Can't," answered the other. "I've nearly missed an appointment as it is. But you'll find me between four and five at the Café des Variétés."

"C'est entendu," and the friends parted. Ernest striding away at a postman-like pace towards the Ambigu, while his brother dramatist, crossing the muddy macadam with infinite precaution, gained the opposite side of the boulevard without a speck on his highly varnished boots; and a minute or two later disappeared beneath a porte-cochère of the Rue Rougemont.

"Bonjour, Madame Boquillard," said Jules, as he entered the small but neatly furnished sanctum of the concierge. "Where's Agathe?"

"I expect her every moment," replied the portress, who was busily engaged in shelling peas, and glancing occasionally through the little window at her liege-lord thumping the carpeted staircase with a worn-out broom. "She went to the Conservatoire an hour ago to take her singing lesson of Monsieur Chose, the professor with a black wig, you know."

"Old rascal!" muttered Jules, lighting another cigarette. "He told

her last week she was an angel, and asked her to supper. He'd better not try that game again," continued he, moodily fingering his moustache.

"Que voulez-vous, Monsieur Jules? It is not the child's fault if people will pay compliments. But when she is Madame Laroche ——"

"When she is Madame Laroche, Mère Boquillard, there will be an end of singing lessons, I can promise you that. Agathe ——"

"Who's talking about me?" exclaimed a merry voice at the door of the loge, followed by the entrance of its owner, a pretty, fresh-looking girl, with hazel eyes and a profusion of chestnut hair. "Bonjour, Jules. I've walked so fast that I'm quite out of breath; all on your account, sir, I was so afraid of missing you. Now, do tell me, is my part a nice one? And what is my stage name to be? You haven't forgotten to think about it, surely!"

"One question at a time, young lady," said her lover, smiling. "As to the part, you haven't got it yet, and if you don't, you'll hardly want any other name but your own: until," he added, fondly stroking her wavy hair, "you take mine. However," he rejoined, noticing her disappointed look, "I *have* thought about it. What do you say to Mdlle. Beauval?"

"Beautiful!" cried Madame Boquillard, rising from her chair in a transport of enthusiasm, and nearly upsetting the peas. "I fancy I see it in large letters on the affiche."

Agathe shook her head.

"I think I have chosen a prettier one," said she. "What do *you* say to Mdlle. Fleury?"

"What can I say except that nothing can be more appropriate to so charming a flower as yourself?" was the gallant reply. "So that point is settled. If we could only manage the other matter as easily! And that reminds me, I must see Darbois before Amanda gets hold of him, or adieu to your chance of playing Ernestine, little one."

"Is Mdlle. Amanda so very fascinating?" inquired Agathe, demurely.

"She thinks herself so, at any rate," replied Jules, with a laugh. "And as long as she fascinates the public, Darbois will probably think so too. Besides, a very intimate friend of hers is part-proprietor of the Nonpareil, and therefore, you understand, the manager can't refuse her anything, so I must go to work cautiously. Meanwhile," added he, drawing a manuscript from his pocket, I have had the part copied out, and if you like it ——"

"If I like it!" interrupted Agathe, in a reproachful tone. "How can you say such things, Jules, when you know I have set my heart on playing it!"

"Without having read a line of it!" retorted Laroche. "Cette confiance m'honore!"

"Don't talk nonsense, monsieur, but give it me directly; I'm dying to see how long it is. Ten, fifteen, twenty pages! and look, mother, how delightful!—one couplet, two couplets. Does Mdlle. Amanda sing, Jules?"

"Sing! with a voice like a nutmeg-grater, and every second note a Couac! No, no; if she plays Ernestine, out go the couplets. The chef-d'orchestre wouldn't stand it. Is your clock right, Mère Boquillard?"

"With the Bourse to a minute, Monsieur Jules," answered the portress.

"Then I have just time for a cutlet before I go to the theatre. Adieu, Mdlle. Fleury," continued he, gaily. "Think of your début, and leave the rest to me. Au revoir, la mère!"

"C'est égal!" grumbled Madame Boquillard, as he hurried out of the loge. "Fleury's a pretty name enough, but it doesn't sound half so aristo as Beauval."

Mademoiselle Amanda, the leading actress of the Nonpareil, occupied a spacious apartment on the second-floor of a newly built mansion on the Boulevard Malesherbes; and at the identical moment when Jules Laroche quitted the abode of his betrothed for the purpose of devoting a quarter of an hour to a hasty déjeûner, was engaged in leisurely terminating her own morning repast, consisting of a delicate slice of pâté-de-foie-gras and a cup of chocolate. While indolently dallying with these dainties, she occasionally glanced at a theatrical journal which lay beside her, wet from the press, and probably criticising some novelty of the previous evening; but her attention appeared to be principally absorbed by a pet spaniel, perpetually begging for tid-bits, and snugly ensconced in a chair adjoining that of his mistress. Mdlle. Amanda was tall and strikingly handsome, but the expression of her countenance was not altogether pleasing; her eyes, of the deepest blue, were singularly lustrous, and an abundance of dark brown hair, the especial pride of her coiffeur, hung over her finely shaped shoulders in picturesque disorder; but her lips were thin, and there was a cold hardness about her mouth and chin suggestive rather of obstinacy than of good temper. By her own account, she was twenty-four years of age; had the certificate of her birth been consulted, we suspect that twenty-nine would have been nearer the mark; but as we are bound to respect the well-known feminine axiom, "On a toujours l'âge qu'on parait avoir," and as Mdlle. Amanda really looked younger than she actually was, it would be an unpardonable act of lèse-gallantry to investigate too closely the mysteries of the parish register.

Presently, after taking a final sip of chocolate, and throwing the *Gazette des Théatres* listlessly aside, she rang a small hand-bell; a summons instantly responded to by the entrance of a sallow-cheeked damsel, neatly attired in a well-fitting cotton gown and black silk apron.

"Is the coiffeur arrived, Esther?"

"Ten minutes ago, madame," was the reply. "He said he would wait till madame had finished breakfast."

"Has the Count sent any message?"

"The usual bouquet, madame; nothing more."

"Ah! and no letter from Monsieur Auguste?"

"None. Madame will pardon me for saying that it is already late, and that the carriage is at the door."

"Bien, ma fille. Tell Causse to come in, then. And, Esther, if Monsieur Auguste should call during my absence, remind him that he will find me at six precisely at the Moulin Rouge."

"And if Monsieur le Comte should ask after madame?"

"You will say that I shall be at home from three to four."

Twenty minutes later Mdlle. Amanda was on her way to the theatre.

Before we follow her thither, it may be as well to introduce the reader to the two personages incidentally mentioned in her conversation with Mdlle. Esther. Count de la Rivière, the intimate friend alluded to by Jules Laroche, had been in his younger days one of the handsomest men in France, and though considerably past fifty, was still regarded by a certain class of Parisian society as a model of what M. Xavier de Montépin aptly terms the "viveur." An influential member of the Jockey Club, and possessor of an ample fortune, he was also a liberal patron of the dramatic, and more particularly the choregraphic art; perhaps a trifle too much after the fashion of the late Marquis of Steyne; but this peculiarity, especially in the little world of the coulisses, rather added to than detracted from his popularity. Latterly, he had abandoned the opera, where his approving nod had been treasured by many an incipient coryphée as an infallible step towards a baton de maréchal, or, in other words, to a pas seul, for the Nonpareil, of which theatre he had become a shareholder; and the sudden interest evinced by him in the establishment presided over by M. Darbois was generally attributed to the bright eyes and captivating blandishments of Mdlle. Amanda.

As for M. Auguste, he was no other than the Honourable Augustus Maltravers, second son of a poor nobleman with a large family, and paid attaché of the English Embassy: the said pay, together with the paternal allowance, barely sufficing for his own gloves and cigars, and for an occasional dinner en tête-à-tête with some fair Bohemian at Durand's, or, by way of variety, at the Moulin Rouge. In Paris, however, impecuniosity, when accompanied by good looks and patrician elegance, is not without its advantages; and Monsieur Auguste, with no other recommendation than his two-and-twenty summers and an irreproachable tailor, was by no means an unwelcome guest in boudoirs for an entrée to which M. Crœsus, of the Bourse, or M. Machin, of the Crédit Mobilier, might have sighed in vain. He had of late devoted

his exclusive homage to the heroine of the Nonpareil; and her reception of his attentions (whether from gratified vanity or any more sympathetic feeling, or both together, matters little) was so encouraging that what had originally been a momentary caprice on his part had insensibly grown into a habit, and at the period when our sketch opens, he had become almost as regular an habitué of the Boulevard Malesherbes as the Count himself. Amanda was, however, far too alive to her own interests to risk any chance meeting between the two; and it required her utmost ingenuity (backed up by that of Mdlle. Esther) to invent a satisfactory alibi on every occasion when such irresistible temptations as a dinner at Saint Germain, or a baignoire at a boulevard theatre prevented her from doing the honours of her salon to M. de la Rivière. But as every Parisian house has its concierge; and as that modern Cerberus, as a general rule, is seldom insensible to the attraction of a twenty-franc piece; the Count was by no means at a loss to account for her frequent absences from home when temporarily released from her professional duties, and if he said nothing to her respecting his discoveries, it might be that he thought the more.

Meanwhile matters were progressing at the Nonpareil. After a long interview with M. Darbois, in the course of which Mdlle. Agathe's début had been determined on, Jules had finished his reading, and the parts of "Les Hasards de l'Amour, vaudeville in one act," had been distributed to the leading members of the company, including Mdlle. Amanda, who, to the despair of the chef-d'orchestre, peremptorily insisted on singing the couplets written for Ernestine. The first rehearsal was fixed for the following day, the manager being anxious to produce the piece as speedily as possible; and in a few minutes the only occupants of the foyer were M. Darbois and Laroche.

"Now, listen to me," said the former; "bring your protégée here this afternoon, that I may see what she is like, and tell her to learn the part and rehearse it with you. If she is half as good as you say, she will make a hit."

"But if Amanda persists in playing it?" objected Jules.

"Don't trouble yourself about that; I know what I know." With which ambiguous assurance, and a Burleigh-like nod, M. Darbois quitted the room. We may be sure that his young companion lost no time in following his example.

A week had elapsed since the events above recorded. Mdlle Agathe, to the ineffable delight of Madame Boquillard, had so completely identified herself with the character of Ernestine as entirely to satisfy the expectations of the author; who privately communicated to the manager his conviction that one single repetition with her fellow performers would amply suffice to familiarise her with the exits and entrances and other stage arrangements of the Nonpareil. The actors,

too, were reasonably perfect in their respective parts, and Chambertin, the jeune premier (his real name, by the way, was Greluchon), whose business it was to make fierce love to Ernestine during the piece, remarked at the conclusion of the sixth rehearsal that he guaranteed a triumphant success, provided that Amanda would for once in a way condescend not to sing false.

"I sing false!" retorted the lady alluded to, reddening with anger; "Monsieur Chambertin, you *may* be a very tolerable jeune premier (mind, I don't say you *are*), but you never sang a note in tune in your life. M. Darbois, I wonder you can stand by, and allow me to be exposed to such insolence!"

"My good Amanda," interposed the manager, "Chambertin is not altogether in the wrong. Between ourselves, I really think it would be advisable to leave out the couplets. What do you say, Monsieur Guichardot?" continued he, addressing the chef-d'orchestre. "What is your opinion of mademoiselle's singing?"

"Faux comme un jeton," replied that functionary, decisively.

"Then, some one else may play the part," exclaimed Amanda, "for I'll not say a word of it. Give it to one of your grues," added she, drawing on her gloves [with such violence as greatly to endanger the buttons; "you've plenty of them!"

Now, in theatrical parlance, a grue being the very acme of awkwardness and stupidity, no more humiliating epithet can be applied to an actress; and the indignant looks of the two or three present plainly showed that they fully appreciated the allusion.

"Am I, then, to understand, mademoiselle," said Darbois, in his gentlest tone, "that you positively refuse to play Ernestine?"

"Since you wish me to repeat what I have said, monsieur," replied Amanda, who had by this time partially recovered herself, "I do positively refuse,—and I have the honour of wishing you a good morning!"

"Pack of idiots!" was her reflection as she descended the stairs; "if it were not for the Count, I'd never set foot on these boards again. However, I've put a spoke in Darbois' wheel, that's one comfort. Plenty of water will pass under the Pont Neuf before he finds another Ernestine!"

Left to themselves, the actors looked at each other somewhat disconsolately.

"Sac-à-papier!" muttered Chambertin. "I didn't mean it to go so far as that. Here's a charming piece, with a glorious part for me, shelved for the next three months! Monsieur Darbois," pursued he, aloud, "I presume we are to go back to the old répertoire?"

"On the contrary, my children," replied the manager, "to-morrow at twelve a final rehearsal; and on the following evening the first performance of 'Les Hasards de l'Amour."

"Bah!" exclaimed Chambertin, thoroughly puzzled. "And Ernestine?"

"That's my affair," said M. Darbois.

During the whole of that day and the next, Mdlle. Esther had little reason to congratulate herself on the serenity of her mistress's temper; nor, indeed, all things taken into account, could the unusual irritability of that lady be deemed absolutely inexcusable. No bulletin from the theatre, no visit from the Count, and, what in her opinion was even more aggravating, no reply to an affectionate note addressed to the British Embassy! After a solitary dinner on the evening subsequent to her abrupt departure from the Nonpareil, Mdlle. Amanda, mechanically skimming the *Patrie*, suddenly started as her eye fell on the following announcement among the dramatic advertisements:

"To-morrow, first representation of 'Les Hasards de l'Amour,' vaudeville in one act."

"Impossible!" she exclaimed, as she read the paragraph over a second time; then, after a minute's thought, bursting into a laugh, continued: "What a simpleton I am! I understand it now. Darbois sent the réclame before I threw up the part, and has forgotten to countermand it!"

However, notwithstanding this apparent tranquillity, it was with a feeling of intense anxiety that she awaited the arrival of the next morning's *Entr'acte*, and one glance at its ill-printed columns not only confirmed her worst apprehensions, but additionally informed her that Mdlle. Agathe Fleury would make her first appearance as Ernestine. Who could Mdlle. Agathe Fleury be? Some new protégée of the Count, no doubt, put forward on the spur of the moment; some raw, inexperienced chit of a girl, who has learnt the part in twenty-four hours, and who will be lucky if she plays it twice! "What a *four* it will be!" resumed Mdlle. Amanda; "I wouldn't miss it on any account. Esther, give these two louis to the concierge, and bid him go to the Nonpareil, and bring back an avant-scène for to-night. Ah! nous allons rire."

Nine o'clock has just struck, and, after a few bars of introductory music, the curtain slowly rises on a garden scene, with a château in the distance, discovering the Marquis de Bois-Soleil (Chambertin) in an elegant costume of Louis XV., reclining on a rustic bench, and imparting instructions to a remarkably sly-looking Frontin. A faint demonstration of applause welcomes the favourite actor.

"Conceited ass, that Chambertin!" mutters Mdlle. Amanda, in her avant-scène.

Exit valet, and soliloquy of the marquis, interrupted by the entrance of Mdlle. Lisette, who, after a little preparatory by-play, delivers a

billet to M. Chambertin, and receives in return a kiss and a purse (stage noblemen are invariably liberal). Marquis reads billet, presses it to his heart, and exit.

A momentary pause ensues. The chef-d'orchestre distributes circular glances among his subordinates, and the violins commence a soft prelude to a pastoral air. The audience begin to fidget in their seats, and Mdlle. Amanda, in her excitement, leans forward eagerly. Every opera-glass is fixed on a slight and graceful figure, in the prettiest of all peasants' dresses, entering from the left wing, and murmurs of approval issue from the stalls, subsiding into hushed attention as the first notes of a sweetly sympathetic voice, of bell-like clearness, ring melodiously through the theatre. The song is finished; and for an instant the spectators, spell-bound, as it were, make no sign. But with the last chords of the accompaniment, a shout of delight breaks forth, such as, perhaps, never before echoed within the walls of the Nonpareil. The claqueurs, surprised by this unexpected ebullition, find their efforts almost unheard amid the cries of "Bis!" from all sides, demanding a repetition of the romance, a request with which Mdlle. Agathe smilingly complies, and at the conclusion is again greeted with a perfect hurricane of applause. Nor is her singing the only point of attraction; her personal beauty and the singular piquancy of her acting afford fresh material for enthusiasm. After a final couplet deliciously warbled by the débutante, the successful piece is announced to be the production of M. Jules Laroche, and Mdlle. Agathe, in obedience to a unanimous call, is led on by the triumphant Chambertin, and overwhelmed with bouquets and bravos.

"Saperlotte!" says Mdlle. Amanda to herself as she retires from her box. "If she has learnt that in twenty-four hours, Darbois is a luckier fellow than I took him for."

Behind the scenes all is jubilation. The manager is in ecstasies, and the actors are (or pretend to be) equally enraptured. More than one obsequious critic has already paid his court to the star of the evening. Ernest, whose drama has been accepted at the Ambigu, is there, radiant and exulting with friendly sympathy. Madame Boquillard, out of her wits with joy, is shaking hands with everybody, laughing and sobbing by turns. M. de la Rivière is not the last to offer his congratulations, but is rather taken aback when politely informed by Jules of his approaching marriage with the charming Ernestine. The Count, however, is a man of the world, and, with the most enchanting urbanity, declares himself "ravi de l'apprendre."

It was in no very enviable state of mind that Mdlle. Amanda returned to the Boulevard Malesherbes, where two letters awaited her arrival, one in the handwriting of M. de la Rivière, the other in that of Auguste. Throwing the former carelessly aside, she hastily broke open the missive of the young attaché, the contents of which were as follows:

"My Angel,—Thy note found me in the midst of preparations for a sudden departure, which will unhappily prevent my seeing thee again. When thou receivest this, I shall be en route for St. Petersburg. Forget not thy "Auguste."

"He will soon have forgotten *me*," she murmured, sadly.

"Will not madame open M. le Comte's letter?" inquired Esther, with the natural curiosity of her species.

"Au fait!" replied her mistress, rousing herself from a momentary fit of abstraction. "Voyons là!"

M. de la Rivière's epistle, carefully sealed with his coat-of-arms, ran thus:

"My dear Amanda,—Circumstances have come to my knowledge which will spare you the inconvenience of my future visits. I enter into no details, nor does a person of your intelligence require any. M. Darbois informs me that your engagement at the Nonpareil expires at the end of the present month, and regrets that his arrangements will not allow him to renew it. Enclosed is a slight souvenir d'amitié.

"Comte de la Riviere."

"A cheque for ten thousand francs!" exclaimed the soubrette, greedily examining a slip of paper which had fallen from the envelope. "Ah, madame! you have killed the golden goose."

"There are more geese than one in the world, Esther."

"True, madame, but they don't all lay golden eggs. Enfin, what's done can't be helped," continued Mdlle. Esther, growing proverbial in her excitement. "But in future, if I were madame——"

"Well, what then?"

"I would bear in mind the old saying: 'Il ne faut pas courir deux lièvres à la fois.'"

C. H.

PARKWATER.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER VIII.

HARD TO GET ALONG.

IN the first-floor apartments of a house at Brompton, one winter evening, there stood a lady at the fire, holding to it first one foot, then the other. Her shoes were damp and dirty; she had only just come in from the wet streets; and her bonnet and cloak were not yet taken off.

It was Sophia May. But oh, how she was altered! Her once blooming, blushing face was pale and thin; it had, besides, a sharp, weary look upon it; and the eyes were sad, as though she had passed through sorrow. No one could have believed, seeing her now, that less than two years had elapsed since she quitted Parkwater.

She had passed through some experiences since then, and they had not tended to give her cheery views of life. Life, indeed, had been a somewhat hard battle with her ever since. For one thing, she had learned what the faith of man was worth; especially the faith of the man Theodore Devereux. He and his vows had proved alike false.

"How quickly shoes wear out!" she exclaimed, looking down at those she was holding to the fire: "these let in the wet already. I must afford myself another pair somehow. Somehow! It's all very well to say 'somehow,' for I don't know how. If the man won't let me have them on trust, I must wait till the next quarter's accounts come in. And people pay so slowly!"

A young servant-girl in a pinafore came upstairs with the candles and tea-tray. "If you please, ma'am," she said, as she lighted the candles, "here's a gentleman at the door; and he says if you are Miss May he should like to see you. He is waiting in the passage."

"A gentleman!—to see me!" she exclaimed, in surprise. "Oh, I daresay it is somebody to offer me a fresh pupil, or to ask my terms."

She threw off her bonnet and cloak in a scuffle, settled her collar, pinned on a bow of blue ribbons which lay on the table, and turned to the glass over the mantle-piece to smooth the braids of her hair.

"You can show him up now, Mary."

The visitor entered. A young, well-dressed gentleman, somewhat given to display in the matter of ornaments—but it was the fashion to be so then. He was of light complexion, with a good-natured but not

over-wise cast of countenance, and a very light, scant moustache. Approaching her, he held out his hand.

"Sophia, have you forgotten me?"

For a few moments she stared as though she had. "It is not Frederick Lyvett!" she exclaimed at length.

"I knew you would remember me. I was in the cigar-shop lower down, and saw you cross the street and come in here. I thought I could not be mistaken, so I came and asked for you."

"At the first instant of my recognizing you," she said, sitting down, and motioning him to an opposite chair, "the emotion that arose to my mind was one of pleasure: but that is now giving place to pain. For the cruelty of your conduct is rising up fast before me."

"What cruelty?" he returned.

"Mr. Lyvett, if you have only come to insult me, I would ask why you have come at all. I should have thought a gentleman would not be guilty of doing so."

"What have I done?" he asked in amazement. "I never was cruel to anyone, least of all to you. I think it was you who were cruel, not to leave your address when you quitted the old place. I have been home nearly twelve months, and have never been able to hear of you. If you forgot me, I never forgot you, and I should only be too glad to renew our former friendship."

The young lady was keen-witted, both by nature and experience. These words of Frederick Lyvett caused a doubt to arise in her mind whether some deceit had not been formerly practised on her; or whether, indeed, it had been but a misapprehension. Ever since Frederick Lyvett's departure on that sea-voyage that had separated them, a very sore feeling had lain on her mind in regard to it and to him.

"When you went away, Mr. Lyvett, you pretended to me that you were sent to Valparaiso on pressing business."

"So I was."

"But as soon as you had sailed we were informed that you went of your own accord, and that it was a planned thing: planned that you might break with me."

"Who said that?"

"The firm. And they turned my father and mother out of the house the same day."

He sat looking at her for some minutes in evident bewilderment, and she at him. Light seemed to dawn upon him.

"Then, by Jove! you may depend that it *was* a planned thing. Planned by them against us both, Sophia; planned to separate us. If I had but suspected this at the time! I remember it did seem to me strange that I, inexperienced, and only just taken into the business, should be started out on an important mission."

"You did not willingly—purposely—run away from me, then?"

"No; on my sacred word of honour. I would not act so treacherously. It must have been my father's doings—and James's. I owe them something for this."

"Were you away long?"

"Eighteen months. What with their keeping me there on (I see now) frivolous pretences, and my knocking up; which I did; and a cruise I took in the South Seas, I was longer than I need have been. But won't you tell me all about yourself, Sophia? What did you do after my departure?"

"I tell you we were turned out of the house without notice."

"Upon what grounds?"

"Only that you had visited us."

"Shameful of my father! I don't know a more arbitrary man than he can be when he chooses, kind as he generally is. Where did you go to?"

"My father and mother obtained another situation after a little while, and I went into a nobleman's family as governess."

"That was pleasant. Did you stay in it?"

"Not a twelvemonth," rapidly answered Miss May. "My health grew delicate—governesses are so overworked, you know—and my friends sent me into the country to recruit my strength. I gave up all thoughts of going out after that; everybody's health will not stand it. Now I live here and teach privately in the neighbourhood, chiefly music. Some of my pupils I go to: some come to me. I was coming in from giving a music lesson when you saw me just now."

"Do you live here all alone?"

"All alone. I have a sitting-room and a bedroom. I never see a soul but my pupils. When the girl said a gentleman was inquiring for me, I thought she must be mistaken. Will you take some tea with me?"

"I cannot stop now. We have people to dinner this evening, and I must get home and dress for it. I will call again to-morrow. I must tell you one thing, Sophia, before I go."

"Yes?" she said, rising.

"That you are very much altered."

They were standing face to face when he spoke, and he had taken her hand to say adieu. So that it may have been the earnest and close gaze he cast upon her, that caused her to blush crimson.

"Not less beautiful," he added, as the rich colour lighted her features; "do not think I mean that: but, still, greatly changed. There is a look of worry on your countenance."

"How can it be otherwise?" was her answer. "Living, as I do, apart from all sympathy, possessing no congenial friends, and with an uncertain future before me? I can assure you, Mr. Lyvett, it is rather a hard struggle for an unprotected woman to get along in the world."

"True, true: that's worry enough. But brighter days may be in store for you," he added, with a meaning smile. "Think so, Sophia."

He quitted the room, and Sophia snatched one of the candles and went to the glass to survey herself. A dissatisfied expression stole to her countenance; but as she pushed and pulled at the braids of her hair, and stroked them in places with her finger, it changed to one of complacent vanity. The meaning of his parting sentence seemed to her clear enough: that he would be glad to renew their former footing, and address her honourably with the view of making her his wife.

"This is better luck than I dreamt of," she said, as if talking to her image in the glass, "and if I play my cards well—who knows?"

But, as she was seated, taking her tea, reflection forced itself upon her, and her mood changed. Ought she to allow a man of honour to make her his wife? Or any man, indeed? None knew better than Sophia May that there existed grave impediments to it. She sat balancing the question in her mind. It was a knotty one, and not easily solved.

"If I could make sure that he would never, never know! It was not my fault," she passionately added; "and oh, it is cruel that my whole life should be blighted through the wickedness of that one false man! Yes; if I were sure that I could keep it from him, I might venture to be Frederick Lyvett's wife. And, once his wife, I should be sheltered from the storms of this cruel world; all my struggles and mortifications and difficulties would be over."

Ringing the bell, she sent the tea-things away. And was about to sit down to her piano, when a knock was heard at the room-door.

"It's that dreadful woman!" she said, with a shiver. "And I have not a farthing for her! I wish the floor would open and swallow her up.——Come in."

The landlady entered. She had come to demand the rent owing to her. She spoke civilly, for she was a respectable woman, and once of a superior class of life; but her tone was cold. She disapproved of some of her lodger's ways. She believed that Miss May, who had a fair amount of teaching, could have paid regularly, if she had not been so extravagant in dress. Besides the rent, she had other debts in the neighbourhood; as the landlady chanced to know.

"Teaching is always flat in winter," observed Miss May. "Families are out of town."

The landlady thought that the class of families Miss May taught in were not out of town, but she passed over the remark.

"I have come upstairs to give you warning," she said, "for I cannot afford to go on in this way. It will be better for me to have the rooms empty, with the bill up and a chance of letting them, than to go on increasing the debt. To-morrow week I shall be obliged to you to vacate them: and I will not stop your clothes, Miss May, which I might do, but trust to your sense of justice to pay me off by degrees."

The speaker left the room, and Sophia May fell into thought. She was in a dilemma. To leave now, might spoil the new prospect flashing

on her vista: let Frederick Lyvett know she was in debt, and he might be scared away for ever. If she changed her abode, the shopkeepers might take alarm, and be down upon her unpleasantly: and the neighbourhood she could not leave, because her teaching lay in it.

"I wonder if *he* would help me?" she suddenly said.

Once more she took a review of her position past and present, bending her knitted and aching brow upon her feverish hand. From her father and mother she could expect no help: in point of fact, she did not even know where to look for them in all the wilderness of London. After quitting Mr. Lyvett's, her father obtained another situation. It was a far inferior one; and when Sophia sought them out, which was not for some months after her departure from Parkwater, a great distaste for the poor way in which they lived took possession of her. "It's of no good, mother," she said; "I can't reconcile myself to come down here; and there's an end of it." The mother sighed. "It's cruel of you to say it, Sophiar; but it's all along of your edication. It were a great mistake. If we had but brought you up to be the same as us!" "But you didn't, you see," returned Sophia: "mistake, or no mistake, it can't be altered now." That was the one only time Sophia had seen her father and mother. She told them she was about establishing herself somewhere in London as music teacher, in what locality she did not yet know, but would write to them when she was settled. She did write—it was many weeks afterwards—and the letter was returned to her through the post with "gone away" written on it. Sophia rightly guessed the cause of the removal. She had seen in the *Times* the death of the master whom her father then served, and concluded it had lost him his situation. Since then, she had not looked after them; she had not had the time, she told herself: and so she did not know their address, or they hers. Her Aunt Foxaby had died while she was at Parkwater.

No; she had neither friends nor help to look to. And, as she has just said, getting along was very hard! As Frederick Lyvett's wife —oh, what a triumph it would be! how all would be changed!

And there was only one single hindrance: which might be no hindrance at all, for it might never be disclosed. I could do this, and I could do the other, reasoned Sophia in her delusive hope. Sophistry beguiles the best of us. Still, but for the loose principles and the absurd notions instilled into her mind by her early training, including the Caterpillar literature, it might not, in this one grave instance, have beguiled even Sophia May. She resolved to suppress all inconvenient remembrances; and Frederick Lyvett's fate was sealed.

"And money for pressing present needs I must have," concluded Sophia, bringing her reflections to a close. "He *must* help me. I shall write and demand it."

She got her writing materials; wrote, sealed, and addressed a letter. Then she drew up a short notice to send to the *Times*.

CHAPTER IX.

THE ADVERTISEMENT IN THE "TIMES."

In a desirable quarter of a fashionable winter watering-place, where the communication with London is speedy and oft, there sat, one morning, a lady and gentleman at breakfast in a room that faced the sea. Colonel and Lady Harriet Devereux. Upon his marriage he had repurchased into the army: hence his rise in military rank.

Lady Harriet was plain—it has been already said—but the goodness of her face and its subdued look of sorrow rendered her an object of interest to a stranger. Colonel Devereux was plain too, far plainer than he used to be, with his disagreeable black eyes, and his dark, dissipated face. He looked older than his actual years; for which he may have been indebted to his irregular life and to his irregular temper. He was dressed in a flowered, crimson-silk dressing-gown, looking rather loose about the neck; and he lay back in an easy-chair, yawning and twirling his great black whiskers. Something had delayed the post that morning, including the newspapers. It was quite sufficient to put out the Colonel. His temper, never good, had grown almost unbearable.

Suddenly he took up his cup, drank what was in it, and pushed it from him with a jerk. His wife drew it towards her.

"You need not give me any more of that trash."

"If you would come in earlier and go to bed, you would feel more inclined for breakfast," she observed, in a quiet tone, one that struggled not to show its long-subdued resentment. "It was four o'clock this morning."

He did not condescend to reply, but leaned forward and pulled the bell. The servant answered it in hot haste: he knew his master.

"Bring my meerschaum."

"Oh, pray do not smoke in this room!" pleaded his wife, in alarm. "It makes me feel so sick."

"If you don't like it you can go out of it," was the civil reply. "My meerschaum—do you hear! What do you stand staring there for?"

The servant did hear, and flew away. But a longer interval elapsed than his master thought necessary, and he had rung another violent peal when the man appeared.

"The postman came, sir, and I waited to take the letters from him," said the man, as he laid down the meerschaum, the *Times*, and some letters before his master. Glancing at the addresses of the latter, the Colonel flung two of them, with a most ungracious movement, towards his wife, opened the third, read it, and put it in the fire. Then he unfolded the *Times*, and his wife took up the supplement. Her eye

glanced, as the eyes of many ladies will glance, to the top of its second column. There was only one mysterious advertisement to-day, and that she proceeded to read aloud, in what she meant for a merry tone. Poor thing! she strove to keep up at least a semblance of good feeling between herself and her husband, but hers was a hard lot. One with a less enduring spirit would not have borne it.

"'*The Corsair. A letter awaits him at the old address. Something has occurred. Send for it without delay. Toujours triste, et la sonnette.*'

"What nonsense they do put in!" she exclaimed. "I wonder whether the persons these notices are meant for ever see them or understand them?"

She looked at her husband, and was astonished at the expression of his eyes. They were strained on her with a half-incredulous, half-angry glare. Not so much meant for her—at least she thought so—as for what she had read. Had she offended him by reading it?

"What is the matter, Theodore?" she timidly asked.

The Colonel recovered his countenance. "Matter? Nothing. What should there be?"

"You were looking at me so fiercely."

"Well I might be, to hear you read aloud that folly."

Her eyelids drooped, drooped to conceal the indignant tears; but she was patient still, and did not retort. He seized his pipe with the fine name, crammed it full of tobacco, lighted it, and puffed out as much smoke as he could puff, probably with the hope of driving her away; but it was his usual mode of smoking. It had the effect desired, and she left the room. The instant she had departed he took the supplement, and devoured the very lines she had read aloud.

"Cursed bother!" he muttered. "I must send for that letter, now! I thought all annoyance from that quarter was over and done with. What 'something' has occurred? Unless—— I hope it has!"

He was still gazing at the lines, as if the gazing at them would solve the enigma, when a servant-maid came into the room.

"Lady Harriet has sent me to ask if you will please step into the nursery, Colonel?"

"What for?"

"The little girl is ill, sir."

"What good can I do if she is?"

"Her ladyship thought——"

"I can't come yet; I am busy," he interrupted. "Leave the room."

Yet it was his own child!

That the advertisement was addressed to him, "The Corsair," he well knew, and he took steps to obey its behest, and have the letter from the old address, which was one in town, conveyed to him. It reached him safely. And if you are curious to see its contents, good reader, here they are:

"You *must* help me. A gentleman who was attached to me before I knew you, has returned from abroad, and is, I think, inclined to make me his wife. He used to think me worthy of being so; he does still. You have *called* me an angel before now: he thinks me one: and, if not rudely undeceived, it will be une affaire finie. I have several pressing liabilities upon me: rent, bills, and something else that you know of. I am to be turned out of these rooms, which I occupy, in a week, because I cannot pay. If this is not prevented, and if the debts come to his knowledge, it will set him thinking, and most probably startle him away. Surely you will aid me! It is to your interest to do so. About £70 or £80 will suffice, but it must come to me without the delay of an unnecessary hour. If I can only accomplish this, the ambition of my early life will be gratified, for I shall be raised to a position in society. Mind that you fail me not.

"S. M."

With a darkened brow he scowled over the letter, pulling at his black whiskers, an inveterate habit of his, especially when put out. "*She* raised to a position in society!" he scornfully spoke. "I shall tell her that it is waste of time to trouble me."

Opening his desk to write a refusal, he put the paper before him and dipped his pen in the ink. But irresolution supervened.

"She's such a tigress when put out," said he, politely. "There's no knowing what she may do if I refuse: find me out, down here, and come bothering me, or something! But it is for the last time, he added, dashing off a few lines rapidly.

"When we squared up our scores, I handed you the balance in a lump, as you desired. If you have chosen to spend it, that is no concern of mine. The prospect you allude to is a lucky one if it can be accomplished, but it is impossible for me to help you to the extent required. I am as poor for my station as you are for yours: and you know that all I have is my wife's, not mine. I send you £50; it is the utmost I can do; and is final.

"T. H. D."

Miss Sophia May received this letter and its enclosure. She paid her landlady, to the latter's extreme surprise, told her that she should remain in her lodgings for the present, paid some other claims, and went on swimmingly. Frederick Lyvett became a constant evening guest: she received him with pleasure, and played off her various fascinations upon him as she had done in the days gone by. Whatever qualms of conscience had at first pricked her, as to encouraging the hopes of this gentleman, were thrust aside for good. He had not outlived his partiality for music, and was never tired of standing over her

while she played and sang. And although Sophia May lived alone, and no third person was present to break their interviews, not a look or word escaped either of them that the most fastidious censor could have found fault with. Once he wished to take her to one of the theatres: she laughingly declined, and told him he knew nothing about propriety. He urged that he had formerly taken her, and where was the harm? Oh, no harm, she answered, but she was only an inexperienced girl then, little acquainted with the usages of society. All this *told* upon Frederick Lyvett: her perfectly correct manners, her apparently high principles, her struggles to maintain herself creditably, and her success (for he saw nothing to the contrary), the shameful way in which she and her friends had been treated for his sake: all this, with her sweet singing and her rare beauty, combined to render her in his eyes very like what Miss May had said—an angel. She pleased equally his judgment, his taste, and his inclination, and he soon began to debate why he should not take her for good and all. The answer suggested itself, that she was far beneath him in birth. True; but her education, mind, and manners would, so he reasoned, adorn any rank, so why should he not raise her to his? Of course there would be one objection—the opposition of his family. But he asked himself the question, and asked it very often, Was the choosing of a wife a matter in which a man ought to consult his family? Not a dishonourable thought had ever crossed Frederick Lyvett's mind in regard to her.

Upon his return from abroad, it struck him almost as a blow to find Sophia had disappeared, together with her father and mother; that a fresh porter had long been installed at the office. May, he was told, had left and taken service with another firm. Fred Lyvett found out the firm—which consisted of one gentleman only—and saw May and his wife. They did not know where Sophia was, they said; and said truly—for it was before she called upon them. Sophia was out somewhere as governess, they told him; her first place was in Ireland, in some lord's family, but they had reason to believe that she had quitted it for another. They had not heard from her very lately; and —that was all they knew, or had to say. Some weeks afterwards, Fred went down to them again—for he could not forget Sophia: and then he found that they were gone away from the place in consequence of the death of the master, and nobody seemed to know where they could be found. From that time Frederick Lyvett had never heard the name of May mentioned. He was beginning to look upon the past episode in his life as a thing gone by and done with; was indeed beginning to forget Sophia, until that most fatal evening when, chancing to be in the neighbourhood of Brompton, he saw her pass in the street. And so the old acquaintanceship was renewed, and he was more madly in love than ever: and Sophia, on her part, saw her aspiring hopes and dreams drawing nearer and nearer towards realization as

the days and weeks went on: saw it with a glowing satisfaction that few could tell of.

But May and his wife had suppressed the cause, of their being turned away, from Mr. Fred Lyvett. In fact, they did not presume to allude to past events in any way. Nobody else had enlightened him; and therefore the fact—that they had been turned away through him—had come upon him all the more startlingly from Sophia.

He questioned her somewhat minutely as to her life during the interval of his absence. Sophia parried it as well as she could, but some of the questions she was obliged to answer. For instance, when he said to her one day, What was the name of the nobleman in whose family you lived in Ireland? she could not pretend to have forgotten it; she had to say Lord Tennygal. She left because of her health, she told him; and after a long respite of country air, when she was staying with an old lady, known to her Aunt Foxaby, she came to the resolve not to be a resident governess again, but to try and get music pupils. And she told it all so artlessly that Fred Lyvett would as soon have thought there was guile or untruth in himself as in her. And thus the months of spring went on.

CHAPTER X.

WARNING.

ONE evening Mr. Lyvett sat at home in his handsome residence at the West End. His wife and daughters were out; Frederick had not come in to dinner at all: and he, being alone, had dropped off into an after-dinner doze in his easy-chair. The entrance of some one aroused him. He took it to be his younger son.

"I say, Fred—— Oh, it is you, James."

James Lyvett drew a chair near his father. Mr. Lyvett—a very courteous man, even to his children—tried to shake off his sleepiness.

"I am paying you a late visit, father," began James; "but I have just heard something about Fred. It's not very pleasant. I thought I would come at once and speak to you."

"Nothing has happened to him—no accident with that young horse he drives?" exclaimed Mr. Lyvett. "He was to have gone with your mother and the girls to-night, but he did not come in."

"No, no; nothing has happened," returned James, in a rather impatient tone. "Do you remember that foolish business of Fred getting himself entangled with old May's girl, when you shipped him off to Valparaiso?"

"Yes. Well?" returned Mr. Lyvett, now very wide awake.

"He is intimate with her again."

"No!"

"He is. Jones came up to dine with me this evening, and he told me of it after dinner, when we were alone. He heard it somehow."

"Where is she? How did Fred find her?"

"She lives somewhere in Brompton. I can't say how Fred found her out. Jones did not know."

"What is she doing at Brompton?"

"Teaching music, I believe. Jones knows nothing against her. Fred is up there with her every day of his life."

"Well, if Fred chooses to play the fool, he must, that's all," testily retorted Mr. Lyvett.

"Yes; but he has no right to play it and disgrace the family. Jones thinks he means to marry her."

"Nonsense, James! Fred's not such a simpleton as all that."

"I would not answer for him, father. The girl must have obtained pretty good hold upon his mind, for him to renew his intimacy with her after the lapse of two or three years."

"What has brought her back to London? I thought she was away; in Ireland, or somewhere."

"Fred knows, I suppose. I don't. Jones thinks she has been teaching for some time; has got a tolerably good connection."

"I'll tell you what, James—— Who is that, coming upstairs?"

"Fred himself, I think. It is like his step."

"Then I'll have the matter out at once," angrily exclaimed Mr. Lyvett.

Fred himself it was. He came into the room, whistling, an evening newspaper in his hand.

"Frederick," began Mr. Lyvett, in a temperate voice, "how is it you were not here, to go with your mother and sisters to-night?"

"I did not intend to go, father. I told Fanny so."

"Where have you been?"

"Been?" echoed Mr. Fred, rather astonished at the question: for Mr. Lyvett was not in the habit of cross-questioning his sons. "To lots of places. A fine night, James, is it not?"

"Perhaps you have been to Brompton?"

"To Brompton, sir!" repeated Fred, in a dubious accent.

"Here, come and sit down. I don't go to bed this night until you and I have had an understanding. A pretty thing James has heard: that you are playing the fool again with that Sophia May!"

"Pray who told you?" demanded Frederick, turning to his brother.

"That is of no consequence," was the reply of Mr. James Lyvett.

"Have you renewed your intimacy with her or not?" sharply interrupted Mr. Lyvett.

"Yes, I have," replied the younger son. "I do not wish to deny it. I have a very great friendship for her, and I am proud of it."

"Well, she's a nice individual to acknowledge a friendship for," sar-

castically cried Mr. Lyvett. "You might remember, Master Fred, that you are speaking to your father."

"Why, what do you take her for, sir?" was the indignant question.

"For old May's daughter originally: for an adventurer lately, and a pretty clever one. What do *you* take her for?" added Mr. Lyvett, looking keenly at his son.

"For one of the best creatures that ever struggled with an unfortunate lot," returned Fred, with something like emotion. "It is rather too bad to call her an adventurer, father."

"I call her what I please: and what I deem to be appropriate," said Mr. Lyvett.

"Her beauty and virtues would adorn a throne," cried Fred, going quite off into rhapsody. "She was born in an obscure sphere, but her qualities fit her for a high one. I only wish you knew her, sir."

"It is enough for one of the family to boast of that honour," was the sarcastic rejoinder of Mr. Lyvett. "I should like to ask you one thing, Frederick: what good do you expect to come of this? Do you think it is creditable for my son to go visiting people on the sly?"

"I have not gone on the sly; I have gone openly. Except that I have said nothing about it at home. I was thinking of doing that."

"Oh, indeed!"

"And you could not expect me to be very open on the point, sir, after what you and James did formerly. Banishing me off to Valparaiso to separate us, and then turning her and her parents out of doors."

"I had nothing to do with the Valparaiso business," said James.

"Some of you had, at any rate."

"We may as well cut short the discussion, or it will last till your mother comes home, and it is of no use worrying her with such a subject," said Mr. Lyvett. "Frederick, you must give this nonsense up. I must have your word of honour upon it."

"I am not prepared to do that," was Fred's reply.

"Why?"

The young man was silent.

"Why? I ask you," irritably repeated Mr. Lyvett.

"My friendship with Miss May is more serious than you imagine sir. I wish to make her my wife."

An ominous pause. Then Mr. Lyvett broke it with a mocking laugh.

"James, go out and get a cap and bells. We will fit him out for Astley's. He shall play the fool's part in the next new pantomime. Oh, Fred! you had better go to school again and learn wisdom."

"A pretty pantomime it is, that he is enacting now!" said James, with a look at his brother. "I am ashamed of you, Frederick."

"It is a man's privilege that he may marry whom he pleases," said Frederick.

"No, sir: he has not a right to marry whom he pleases, when the step would disgrace himself and his family," retorted Mr. Lyvett.

"My family are prejudiced, or they would not deem this a disgrace. I acknowledge that Sophia May's birth and rearing are not equal to mine; but many better men than I have got over that obstacle, and found themselves none the worse for it."

"We will put her birth out of the discussion, if you will," said Mr. Lyvett; "her rearing also. There is a more serious obstacle, Frederick. Pray are you aware that she went out as governess?"

"Yes. In Lady Tennygal's family."

"And did you hear how she got in, there?"

"Got in?" echoed Frederick. "I don't understand you, sir."

"She got in to Lord Tennygal's house by fraud. Gave false accounts of herself; forged certificates, and all that. Now you are a lawyer, Fred, and know how that can be punished."

"Nonsense, sir! You must be under a mistake."

"I am under no mistake," returned Mr. Lyvett. "One of the letters of recommendation purported to come from us—Lyvett, Castlerosse, and Lyvett. Her father was palmed off as a dead man, but once an eminent solicitor and friend of ours. Other recommendations were equally false; and, on these, she was admitted to the family. Lord Tennygal applied to us afterwards, and to Lady Langton; who, in point of fact, was the first person imposed upon, as it was she who saw the certificates and engaged Miss May; and thus the plot was laid bare. Miss May's services in Lord Tennygal's family were dispensed with the same day."

"But she could have known nothing of these false recommendations!" exclaimed Fred Lyvett.

"Of course not," mimicked his father. "They dropped into Lady Langton's hands from the clouds, just in the nick of need. What a greenhorn you are, Fred!"

"If you knew her, you would not suspect her of such conduct," retorted Frederick. "She is honour itself. Perhaps her parents, over-anxious, may have been tempted —— But I have no right to say this. However it may have been, I will stake my name that she herself was innocent."

"You'd lose the stake. There can be little doubt that she herself furnished them. At any rate, there can be none that she was a party to the conspiracy. I forget the details now, but it was all plain enough to me at the time. The old Dowager Langton came to me at the office, and we went into the matter together. A fine rage she was in; threatened to prosecute Miss May. Steer clear of her, Fred, my boy: she's too clever for you."

"Of course I will inquire into this," conceded Frederick. "But I

am perfectly sure she will come out of it as bright as crystal: you could not look at her, sir, and believe otherwise."

"You need not talk about looks, Fred," broke in James. "You never could read people or countenances in your life. You know it."

"I will answer for her perfect innocence in the affair beforehand," repeated Frederick to his father, turning his back on James. "What other people did was no fault of hers, sir; and I shall not allow it to make any difference in my intentions."

"Then understand me, Frederick; you must choose between this girl and your family. If you degrade yourself by marrying her, you are no longer one of us, and you must leave the business."

"That's all talk," thought Fred. "Said to intimidate me."

"Either he or I should go out of it," added Mr. James, in a determined, haughty manner. And he rose and said good-night to his father.

It broke up the conference. Indeed, Mrs. Lyvett and her daughters entered almost immediately.

On the following evening Frederick dashed up to Brompton. It was of little use his going in the day time, as Miss May was engaged with her teaching. She was at tea.

"Is it true, Sophia, that you knew of those false recommendations?" he asked, after a confused and hurried account of what he had heard.

"Oh *dear* no," replied Sophia, lifting her hands in horror at the bare idea. "*I* know of them! what do you take me for? My Aunt Foxaby managed it all. A friend of hers, Mrs. Penryn, who interested herself greatly for me, wrote to Lady Langton in my favour. What she really said, I know no more than you, for I never saw the letter, but it would appear that it was not too clearly worded. She said, I believe, that my father had been attached to the house of Lyvett, Castlerosse, and Lyvett; Lady Langton took that to imply that he had been a partner, and wrote to that effect to Lady Tennygal. The first intimation I had that anything was wrong was from Lord Tennygal. You may imagine my surprise. It came upon me like a blow; for it caused them to dismiss me. Nothing underhanded, much less wrong, was intended by my Aunt Foxaby and Mrs. Penryn; they would not be capable of it; and they would both tell you so if they were not dead."

"But the letter of recommendation purporting to come from Lyvett, Castlerosse, and Lyvett?" pursued Frederick.

"I never comprehended that," acknowledged Sophia, all fair-spoken candour. "It was always a puzzle to me. My own opinion was, that no such letter was ever written: if it was, it must have been the work of some enemy who wished me ill. I did not seek much to fathom it; the matter altogether was too painful to me; and where was the use when my situation was gone? I'm sure I thought I should have fainted with grief the day they turned me away. One thing alone bore me up—the consciousness of my innocence."

"If ever I desert her, may I be——smothered!" ejaculated Fred to himself, in an ecstasy of admiration. "I knew it would prove to be no fault of hers. My father is so prejudiced that he would impute anything to her. And James is worse, for he is as exclusive as the day. I'll marry her in private at once; and, if they find it out, they must storm, that's all."

He sat, lost in thought, letting the cup of tea which Sophia had handed him grow cold on the table. Perhaps Frederick Lyvett's guardian angel was secretly struggling with him against the resolution. Certain it was, that many reasons presented themselves before him why it should not be. But a man in love and a wilful man are alike hard to grapple with; and Fred Lyvett threw doubts to the winds.

"Sophia," said he, lifting his head at length, "my people at home are regularly set against us: it is of no more use to ask their consent to our union than it would be to ask the Lord Chancellor's. I see nothing for us but a private marriage. You are wearing yourself out with this lesson-giving; but, as my wife, you will at least have leisure and comfort. I don't yet take anything like the income James has, but I get a good round sum, and I think it is the best thing we can do."

Sophia thought so too. She sighed down her satisfaction, and timidly whispered that she would "resign her will to his."

He thought she had better give up her teaching instanter, and go down to some quiet place in the country, where there was a rural church. He would come and see her on the Sundays; and when things were in readiness, say in a month or so, they would be married. Sophia said Yes to all.

Then they began to discuss arrangements; and the evening passed rapidly on till the clock struck ten. It was Fred's signal for leaving, and he wished her good-night.

Putting her feet on the fender, she sat plunged in the golden visions that the future was to bring forth. But all in a moment, when they were at their brightest, there came upon her, unbidden, a thought of a different nature. It gave her a fit of shivering, and she shook for a minute or two from head to foot.

"Oh," she cried to herself, "would it not be better to refuse him even yet, and go on as I am going? Why should I shiver all on a sudden like this? Does it come to me as a warning?"

On the following morning when Fred Lyvett's cab waited for him, the groom having some work to restrain the impatient horse, Mrs. Lyvett called her son to her side.

"What is it, mother? I am in a hurry. My father is already gone, and I shall get in for it again for being late."

"Only one little minute," she said. "What is this whisper that I have heard?"

Fred's cheek flushed. He dearly loved his mother. He sat down

on the sofa, and Mrs. Lyvett rose and placed her hands on his shoulders, looking into his face with her loving eyes.

"Your father has been much put out. I have gathered enough to know that it is about you: that you are acquainted with some one not at all proper—some one that you say you will marry."

"That's my father's version. She ——"

"Hush, Frederick, I would rather not enter into it. I only want to say a word. You are aware that you were ever my favourite child. I have loved you dearly, better than I did the others."

He laid hold of his mother's hands and kept them, and she leaned forward till her cheek touched his.

"It is but a little word that I wanted to whisper," she continued to repeat. "Dearest Frederick, remember that no good comes of disobedience; *never be betrayed into it.* If your father is averse to your wishes, and thinks them unsuitable, wait with patience; remember your duty to him; and perhaps time will soften obstacles and bring your hopes to pass. You know that he has only the interest of his children at heart. Be not tempted to act rebelliously against your parents, for no good would attend it. It is your mother, my darling boy, who tells you this."

She kissed his cheek with affectionate earnestness, and hurried from the room, wishing to avoid further mention of the topic, then and always. Never, never did she think that more than a word was needed by him, who had always been so considerate and obedient. Frederick Lyvett descended to his cab, and drove down to the office in so sober a style that his groom wondered. He was in a serious mood all that day: should it be disobedience, or should it not? He was well-principled, and had hitherto been affectionately dutiful. If that unhappy girl had not taken so deep a hold on his heart!

CHAPTER XI.

A STOLEN MARCH.

It is truly strange how things come about in this world of ours! A few weeks subsequent to the above events, Mr. Castlerosse, the second partner in the house of Lyvett, was seeking for a clergyman with whom to place his son to read for Oxford. One Saturday morning a client, who was at the offices on business, strongly recommended to him a Mr. Balfour, the incumbent of a retired parish in Surrey. So Mr. Castlerosse, being an impulsive man, took an early dinner and went down without delay to see Mr. Balfour. Luck did not favour Mr. Castlerosse: Mr. Balfour was gone to town, and would not be home till late at night. So Mr. Castlerosse, unwilling to have had his journey

for nothing, and finding there was a comfortable inn, telegraphed to his family that he should not be at home until Monday.

Mr. Castlerosse was a good churchman, rarely missing divine service. But on the Sunday morning the skies were so blue, and the leaves of the trees so green, the air altogether was so refreshing, and the country so lovely, that perhaps he may have been forgiven for strolling and sitting in the fields and lanes instead of attending church. He never forgave himself for it afterwards.

He went to church in the evening: and, after service was over, walked home by invitation with Mr. Balfour, and sat with him for an hour or two. Upon rising to leave, he inquired, pursuing the thread of their conversation, whether Mr. Balfour would not go to town with him by the early train: for the clergyman was to go up to see Mrs. Castlerosse and his future pupil.

"No," answered Mr. Balfour. "I have a marriage to perform."

"You do not get many of them, I expect, in this little place," cried Mr. Castlerosse.

"Very few indeed. These parties are from London. The lady has been down here three or four weeks, lodging at a farm-house."

"A nice, lady-like young woman, she seems," interposed Mrs. Balfour; "a Miss May. The gentleman is a Mr. Lyvett."

"May! Lyvett!" echoed Mr. Castlerosse, recalling the old affair and the shipping off of Fred: he had not been informed of the recent trouble. "What's his Christian name? What sort of a looking man is he?"

"A fair young man, with a light moustache and an eye-glass. And," added the clergyman, referring to a paper, "his name is Frederick. Frederick Lyvett and Sophia May."

The effect this information had on Mr. Castlerosse, who was a most excitable man, was such as to startle Mr. and Mrs. Balfour. He soon explained himself, and demanded that the ceremony should be stopped.

"I have no power to refuse to marry them," observed the clergyman. "They are both of age."

"Of age!" repeated the heated Mr. Castlerosse. "Heaven and earth, sir! Don't I tell you it is a horrible runaway marriage, that will ruin Fred for life, and drive Mr. Lyvett mad?"

"They were asked in church for the third and last time this morning, and both of them were present."

"Oh, good heavens," cried Mr. Castlerosse; "and I should have heard it, had I only been there, and could have pounced upon him! Well, sir, I tell you that this marriage, if it takes place, will drive his father mad, and give his mother the heartache for life. The girl is no better than an adventuress."

But still the clergyman shook his head, and urged that without just grounds he could not stop it.

Away tore Mr. Castlerosse to the station of the electric telegraph. Nobody was there who could send a message: it was beyond hours. Mr. Castlerosse stormed and bribed, and a porter ran for the telegraph clerk. More storming, more bribing: and at length a message was flashed to the head office in London, and Mr. Castlerosse returned to the inn to sleep.

Frederick Lyvett was also sleeping there. For, as Mr. Castlerosse ascended the stairs to his bedroom he saw a door opened in the corridor, and a pair of boots thrust out by an arm in a shirt-sleeve. Whether the half-dressed gentleman saw him, he did not know, but he recognised Frederick Lyvett. "Ah ha, Master Fred, my boy!" he thought, "you'll get a pill, perhaps, instead of a wife." He did not attempt to see and reason with him. Instinct told him it would be useless. He preferred to leave that to Mr. Lyvett, who would be down by the earliest train.

At six o'clock the following morning, Mr. Castlerosse was up, and away to the railway station; where he had the pleasure of sitting on the bench outside for nearly an hour before it was opened. With the first appearance of a porter, he rushed up and seized hold of him. The porter recognized him as the gentleman who had played some antics in the telegraph-office the night before, wanting to telegraph up to the chief office that no —— clerk was in attendance.

"What time does the first train get in here from London?" demanded Mr. Castlerosse.

"The first train don't stop here," said the porter.

"Then the first that does stop?—— But he'd no doubt get a special," he added to himself.

"Well, it don't get in much afore 8·45. It's due at 8·40; but the steam ain't never up with a will the forepart of a journey. It a'n't had time to get itself up."

"8·45! That's a quarter to nine," groaned Mr. Castlerosse, "and they are to be married at eight! I hope and trust he will be able to get a special. Are there any flys or coaches to be had here?" he inquired aloud.

"There's a man as keeps one fly. He don't get much to do. He's a blacksmith by trade, and he ain't often called out of his forge to drive."

"Where can I find him?"

"He lives a rood or two t'other side of the Wheatsheaf Inn."

Away walked Mr. Castlerosse. The blacksmith's shop was easily found, and the blacksmith was in it, shoeing a horse. A tall, intelligent-looking man.

"I am told that you have a fly for hire," began Mr. Castlerosse.

"A one-horse fly, sir."

"I want you to be with it at the station this morning, to wait for a gentleman whom I expect ——"

"By up train or down, sir?" interrupted the man.

"Down. And when he comes, drive him with all speed to the church. Be in waiting there directly you can get ready; by half-past seven if possible. I think he will come by a special train."

The blacksmith looked up from his employment. "I can't take the job, sir, if you want me to be there before the regular down train. I could be there for that, but not before. I have got a wedding this morning at eight o'clock."

"You must go to the station," peremptorily spoke Mr. Castlerosse. "I don't care what I pay you."

"It is not a question of payment, sir," civilly answered the man. "I have engaged myself to this lady and gentleman, and I would not do such a thing as go from my word. I take them to the church, wait for them, and take them from thence to the station, to catch the quarter to nine down train."

Mr. Castlerosse seemed beaten on all sides. He turned crustily from the unmanageable blacksmith; went back to the station, and charged the porter to tell any gentleman who might arrive by a special train from London that he must make for the church without the loss of a moment. Then, bending his steps towards the churchyard, he paced about amongst the gravestones. In his state of excitement he could not sit still, or remain away from the chief scene of action. A little before eight the doors were opened; he entered the church and ensconced himself behind a pillar, where he could see and not be seen. There were no signs yet of Mr. Lyvett, but presently the wedding party came in.

The bride was first, looking lovely; that fact struck even the prejudiced mind of Mr. Castlerosse. Who on earth was conducting her? Mr. Castlerosse stared, rubbed his eyes, and stared again. To his horrible conviction, his unbounded indignation, it was——his own favourite nephew! A medical student, graceless in the sight of the rest of the world, painstaking in that of Mr. Castlerosse, whom *he* had had thoughts of benevolently setting up in practice; the good-looking, careless, random Charley Castlerosse.

Scarcely had the clergyman begun the service when Mr. Castlerosse glided forward. "I forbid the marriage," he said. "I can show cause why it should not take place."

A shudder passed through the frame of Sophia May. She did not know who caused the interruption, or what plea was going to be urged. Her face assumed the paleness of the grave, and she bent it forward and hid it on the altar-rails. The bridegroom, however, turned round and confronted the intruder. Whilst Charley Castlerosse never turned at all, for he had recognised the voice, and hoped to escape unseen, only wishing there was an open grave at hand that he might drop into it.

The scene that ensued was one never yet witnessed in that quiet little church; but Mr. Castlerosse failed to show any legal grounds for delaying the marriage. "His father will be here directly," he screamed; "he'll be here with a strait-waistcoat; he's coming by the first train."

Frederick Lyvett took a high tone. He dared Mr. Castlerosse to show just or legal cause for his interruption, and he dared the clergyman to stop the ceremony. Mr. Balfour, with a sigh, opened his book again, and Mr. Castlerosse looked vainly out for Mr. Lyvett. There was time yet. How was it that Mr. Lyvett had not come? Where was the special train?

How was it, indeed, that Mr. Lyvett had not come? On the previous evening, the family and servants having retired to rest, for it was Mr. Lyvett's safe and good old custom to be up *last* in the house, as it had been his father's before him, he and his wife were preparing to follow them, when Mrs. Lyvett spoke.

"James, I do believe Frederick has not come in!"

"My dear, I told you that Fred went out yesterday for some days."

"Oh, I understood you to say until to-night only. Where is he gone?"

"I did not ask him. He has taken his own course lately with little reference to me. Somewhere in the country. I expect Charley Castlerosse is with him, for Rowley saw them in a cab together, with a portmanteau or two upon it. They are off on some expedition, I suppose. Fred has lately been out of London a good bit: and I am rather glad that it should be so," added Mr. Lyvett, significantly. He had no idea that somebody else was also out of it.

He had put out the lights and taken up the bed-candlestick, when a tremendous peal at the hall-bell echoed through the house.

"What can that be?" exclaimed Mrs. Lyvett.

"Some drunken fellows passing. I wish I was behind them." But there followed a second peal, louder than the first.

"Don't go down," cried Mrs. Lyvett. "Look from the window." Mr. Lyvett took the advice, opened it and leaned out.

"Who is that?"

"Is this J. Lyvett, Esquire's?"

"Yes."

"Telegraphic dispatch, sir."

"Who from?"

"Don't know."

Mr. Lyvett went down, and returned with the dispatch in his hand. He read it by the light of the bedroom candle, his wife looking over him. Surely such a message was never sent by telegraph before: but Mr. Castlerosse was not collected when he wrote it.

"Fred's down here: going to be married to-morrow at eight o'clock

to that serpent-crocodile. Take a special engine and come and stop it. The old affair revived. May, the porter.

"HENRY CASTLEROSSE."

Mr. Lyvett was in a cab the next morning betimes, and had nearly reached the railway station, prepared to demand a special train, when in putting his hand in his pocket to get the fare ready for the cabman, he discovered, to his consternation, that he had left his money-case at home. This was through being over-cautious. He had put the case out on the drawers the previous night, lest he might forget to change it from one suit of clothes to the other in the hurry of dressing; and on the drawers it was still. He had to drive back; and this delayed him considerably above an hour. The clock was striking eight as he finally drove up to the station. He knew that the train must be then about going out.

"A first-class ticket for Eaton," he breathlessly exclaimed, throwing down a sovereign. "How much time have I?" he added, as he took up the change.

"None. It is starting now. You can't go by it. The express leaves at ten."

"I must go by it," he said, rushing up to the line of carriages. "Hi! stop! stop! Porter! stop!"

"Too late, sir," said the porter. "Train's on the move."

"Open a door, man! It's a business of life or death. Open a door, I say. Here! all right; never be known."

Something of a golden colour mysteriously found its way into the porter's hand, and a door, quite as mysteriously, flew open. It belonged to a third-class carriage, the last of the train. Mr. Lyvett scrambled into it.

The train steamed up to its destination; that is, Mr. Lyvett's destination; steamed well. It was only forty-one minutes past eight when it reached Eaton. He sprang from the carriage.

"This is a first-class ticket," cried the porter, eyeing him suspiciously.

"And if I choose to pay for a first-class carriage and sit in a third, what's that to you? How far is the church off?"

"Half a mile."

"Which is the way to it?"

"Out at the back, down the steps, and straight along up the road."

"Any carriage to be had?"

"No. Payne's fly was here, bringing folks to the train, but it's gone again."

Mr. Lyvett rushed madly down the steps. The road was before him, and he could see the church spire rising at a distance; but it looked more like a mile away than half a mile. What could he do to get there? What a shame that no conveyance was in waiting! The knot might

be being tied then, and he arrive just too late. As to running, that was beyond him: it was up-hill, and he was a fat man. He espied a horse fastened to the palings of a small house close to the egress: a butcher's boy and his tray had just jumped off it; he was taking the station-master's wife, who lived there, some steak for their dinner. Without consideration, Mr. Lyvett unhooked the bridle, mounted on the horse, and urged him to a gallop. The dismayed boy, when he had recovered his astonishment, started in the wake, hallooing, "Stop thief!" with all his stentorian lungs, which only made the horse fly the faster. About half-way to the church the rider came upon Mr. Castlerosse, sitting philosophically on the top of a milestone by the roadside.

"Well?" cried Mr. Lyvett, pulling up, as speedily as the pace he was going would allow.

"*Well* it is, I think," grunted Mr. Castlerosse. "Why couldn't you come before?"

"Am I in time?"

"No, you are not. They are married and gone. You couldn't expect to be."

"Are they really married?" gasped Mr. Lyvett, his arms dropping powerless with the news.

"They are. I stood in the church and saw it done. I strove to prevent it, but was not allowed. *I* was not his father."

Mr. Lyvett slowly descended from the horse. To encounter the panting and abusive butcher-boy, who protested the policeman was a-coming up with the 'ancuffs. A short explanation and another golden piece settled the lad, and sent him riding off in wild glee.

"You say they are gone. Where?"

"In that train which I suppose you got out of," was poor Mr. Castlerosse's testy reply, as he pointed to the smoking carriages whirling along in the distance. "A more determined, obstinate, pig-headed man than your son has shown himself this day, I never saw. It will come home to him, as sure as his name's Fred Lyvett."

"As he has made his bed, so he must lie on it," returned Mr. Lyvett, striving to make light of his bitter grief. But not in their worst anticipations could he and Mr. Castlerosse suspect how very hard that bed was to be.

And meanwhile Frederick Lyvett and his bride were steaming gaily away, having won their stolen march.

(*To be continued.*)

"ONCE UPON A TIME."

OH time of fairy fancies, of youth and its romances,
Of green and happy valleys which our light steps wandered o'er;
With all their sweet birds singing, and dewy blossoms springing,
The spell that once thy gates unsealed our lips repeat no more.

On ivied tower and hoary rests the same soft summer glory,
On banks of yellow cowslips where the same glad streamlets run;
On the garden's scented posies, its white and crimson roses,
And orchard walls where blushing fruits are rip'ning in the sun.

Full in the sunlight golden still stands the dial olden,
With the dainty blooms around it, and above, the laughing day;
But there the shadows linger, where time's effacing finger
O'er each sunny moment passeth, and beareth it away.

Where are the autumn rambles, through the mellow-fruited brambles,
The nuttings in the dim woods, and the fairy tale and rhyme
To which our hushed hearts listened, while the wintry casement glistened
'Midst the hoarfrost and the starlight in that "once upon a time"?

Till through our childish dreaming swept elfin glories gleaming,
And we wandered 'mid green woodlands all aglow with flowery store;
Where a little loitering maiden, scarlet hooded, blossom laden,
With her small feet traced the mossy paths—returning nevermore.

Ye plots of blushing flowers, ye fragrance-breathing bowers,
And the blackbird's joyous carol, under skies of softest blue:
Care is the dreary warden of life's enchanted garden,
And the bitter herbs that grow therein, sad rosemary and rue.

The fount grown to a river, it backward floweth never,
And manhood scorns the simple joys that once beguiled the child;
But on sternest paths of duty fall heav'n's dews in balmy beauty,
As upon the daisied meadow, so upon the rugged wild.

After spring-buds, faint and tender, comes the summer's leafy splendour;
After autumn's golden garner, the winter's sterile bough;
And the old man still remembers, sitting idly by the embers
Glowing brightly on the hearth, the faded hopes of long ago.

J. I. L.

good Wardour-street imitations of the genuine article. On one side of the hearth, however, stood a capacious, modern easy-chair, for the special delectation of Mr. Peter Byrne, while in neighbourly proximity to it was the long-stemmed pipe with the china bowl. On the opposite side of the hearth stood another article, that seemed more out of keeping with the rest of the room even than the easy-chair. It was a couch or lounge of the most modern fashion, and upholstered with a gay flowery chintz. There could be no doubt as to the person for whose behoof this gay piece of furniture was intended. Stretched on the floor in front of it, and doing duty as a rug, was a magnificent tiger-skin. On this stood an embroidered footstool. At the back of the couch was a screen painted with Chinese figures and landscapes. Near it hung a guitar.

Gerald advanced slowly into the room, and for a moment or two he totally failed to recognize the man who rose out of the easy-chair to greet him. It was Byrne: and yet it was not Byrne. "It must be his father, or an older brother," said Gerald to himself. Even when the man held out his hand and whispered: "Is there anybody outside the door?" he was still in doubt.

"There is no one outside the door," said Gerald. "I came up the stairs alone."

"That's all right, then, and I'm very glad to see you, Mr. Warburton," said Byrne's familiar voice, after which there could no longer be any doubt. "Not a bad make-up, eh?" he added, with a chuckle, as he noted Gerald's puzzled look.

"I certainly did not know you at first," replied the latter. "In fact, I took you for your own father."

"You could not pay me a higher compliment, sir," said Byrne, with a gleeful rubbing of the hands. "It is part of the scheme I have in view, that Van Duren should take me to be an old man, very feeble, very infirm, and nearly, if not quite, on my last legs."

"You look at the very least twenty years older than when I last saw you," remarked Gerald.

"And yet the transformation is a very simple matter," said Byrne. "It would not do to tell everybody how it's done, but from you I can have no secrets of that kind. In the first place, I had my own hair cropped as closely as it was possible for scissors to do it. Then I had this venerable wig made with its straggling silvery locks, and this black velvet skull-cap. Two-thirds of my teeth being artificial ones, I have dispensed with that portion of them for the time being, and that of itself is sufficient to entirely alter the character of the lower part of my face. Then this dress—this gaberdine-like coat down to my knees, my collar of an antique fashion, my white, unstarched neck-cloth, fastened with a little pearl brooch, this slight stoop between my shoulders, my enfeebled walk, and the stick that I am now obliged to use to help me

across the room: all simple matters, my dear sir, but, in the aggregate, decidedly effective."

Mr. Byrne omitted to mention that, as a conscientious artist bent on looking the character he meant to play, he had for the time being abandoned the hare's foot and rouge-pot. Although his use of those articles had always been marked by the most extreme discretion, his discarding of them entirely did not tend to make him look younger.

"And then you must please bear in mind that I am afflicted with deafness," added Byrne, with a smile, when Gerald had drawn a chair up to the fire. "It is not a very extreme form of deafness, but still it is necessary that I should be spoken to in a louder voice than ordinary; and it is sufficiently bad," he added, with a chuckle, "to prevent me, as I sit in my easy-chair by the fire, from overhearing any little private conversation that you and another person—my daughter, for instance—might choose to hold together as you sit by the sofa there, only a few yards away."

"I certainly can't understand," said Gerald to himself, "how all this scheming, and all these disguises, can in any way further the object which Ambrose Murray has so profoundly at heart."

Gerald felt mystified, and he probably looked it. As if in response to his unspoken thought, Byrne presently said: "All these things seem very strange to you, I do not doubt, Mr. Warburton; but you will believe me when I assure you that I have not for one moment lost sight of the particular end for which my services are retained. As soon as I begin to see my way a little more clearly—if I ever do—my plans and purposes shall all be told to you and Mr. Murray. I have built up a certain theory in my mind, and there seems only one way of ascertaining whether that theory has any foundation in fact. If it have, it may possibly lead us on to the clue we are in search of. If it have not—but I will not anticipate failure, however probable it may be. If I still possess the confidence of Mr. Murray and yourself, if you are still willing to let me have my own way in this thing for a little while longer, then I am perfectly satisfied."

"We have every confidence in you, Mr. Byrne," said Gerald, earnestly, "and we are both satisfied that the case could not have been entrusted into more capable hands than yours."

While Gerald was speaking, a door that led to an inner room was opened, and Miriam Byrne came in.

Byrne rose, laid one hand on the region of his heart, and gave a graceful wave with the other. "My daughter, Mr. Warburton—my only child," he said.

"I am glad that you have called to see us, Mr. Warburton," said Miriam, frankly, in her rich, full voice. "My father has talked so much about you that my curiosity was quite piqued, to see for myself what his rara avis was like."

"You will find that I am a bird of very homely plumage," replied Gerald, with a smile. "Your father has been drawing on a too lively imagination. I am afraid that his rara avis will prove to be nothing more wonderful than our familiar friend—the goose."

"What a superb creature!" was Gerald's thought, as he sat down opposite Miriam; and that was the right phrase to apply to her.

Miss Byrne was at this time close upon her twenty-second birthday. Her beauty was of an altogether Eastern type. Hardly anyone who met Miriam in the street took her to be an English girl; while to those who knew both her and her father it was a constant source of wonder how "old Peter" could come to have for his daughter a girl so totally unlike him in every possible way. But Byrne's wife, who died when her daughter was quite an infant, had been a beautiful woman, and Miriam more than inherited her mother's good looks. People, knowing the family, averred that she was an exact counterpart of her grandmother: a lovely Roumanian Jewess, who had been brought over to England in the train of an Austrian lady of rank, and having found a husband here, had never gone back.

Eyes and hair of the blackest had Miriam Byrne. Large, liquid eyes, shaded with long, black lashes, and arched with delicate, well-defined brows; hair that fell in a thick, heavy mass to her very waist. Tints of the damask rose glowed through the dusky clearness of her cheeks. Her forehead was low and broad as that of some antique Venus. Her mouth was ripe and full, and might have looked somewhat coarse had it not been relieved by her finely-cut nose with its delicate nostrils. She had on, this evening, a long, trailing dress of violet velvet, which harmonised admirably with her dusky loveliness—a rich, heavy-looking dress by gaslight, but one which daylight would have shown to be faded and frayed in many places. It had, in fact, at one time been a stage dress, and as such, had been worn by Miss Kesteven of the Royal Westminster Theatre, when playing the heroine of one of Sardou's clever dramas.

The necklace of pearls, with ear-rings to match, which Miriam wore this evening were also of stage parentage, but they looked so much like the real thing that no one, save an expert, could have told without handling them that they were nothing better than clever shams. The one ring, too, which she wore—a hoop of diamonds—on her somewhat large, but well-shaped, hand, was not more genuine than her pearl necklace. It had been bought for a few shillings in the Burlington Arcade; but it flashed famously in the gaslight: and as one cannot well take off a lady's ring in order to examine it, it answered its purpose just as well as if it had cost a hundred guineas.

But we must not be too hard on Miriam. No doubt she was as fond of a little finery as most of her sisters are at two-and-twenty, but, in the present case, all these sham trinkets had been assumed by her at her father's wish, and "for a certain purpose," as the old man said.

At the same time one need not imagine that the wearing of them, although they were counterfeit, was in any way distasteful to Miriam. As she herself would have been one of the first to say, So long as other people accepted her jewellery as real, the end for which they were worn was thoroughly gained.

"And how do you like your new home, Miss Byrne?" asked Gerald.

"I would much rather it had been at the West End than in the City," answered Miriam. "The rooms I like very much. They are large and old-fashioned, and have seen better days. To live in such rooms makes one feel as if one were somebody of importance: as if one had money in the Bank of England. But the look-out is dreadful. At the back, into that horrid churchyard: while in the front, there is nothing to be seen but a high, blank wall. I am always glad when it is time to draw the curtains and light the gas."

"You must get out for a little change and amusement now and then," said Gerald. "It will never do for you to get moped and melancholy through shutting yourself up in this gloomy old house. A visit once a week to a theatre, for instance, or ——"

"Don't speak of it," interrupted Miriam. "I hope I shall not see the inside of a theatre for a couple of years at the very least."

"Perhaps the opera would suit you better," suggested Gerald, altogether at a loss to know why the theatre should be so emphatically tabooed. "If you are fond of the opera, I think I can manage to get a couple of tickets for you now and then."

"Oh, that will be delightful!" exclaimed Miriam, clasping her hands with Oriental fervour. "I have never been to the opera but twice in my life, and I should dearly love to go again."

"Then you are fond of music?" asked Gerald.

"Passionately. I love it anywhere and everywhere; but I love it best on the stage. That is the glorification of music. It is to honour music as it ought to be honoured. When I listen to an opera, I seem to be lifted quite out of my ordinary self. I feel as if I were so much better and cleverer than I really am. And then I always have a longing to rush on to the stage and join in the choruses and make one more figure in the splendid processions."

"I will send you tickets for Friday, if you will honour me by accepting them," said Gerald.

"You are very kind, Mr. Warburton, and to such an offer I cannot find in my heart to say No," answered Miriam, with a smile. "Oh, how I wish I were clever!" she cried next moment: "clever enough to be a great singer on the stage, or to paint a great picture, or to write a book that everybody talked about. Don't you think, Mr. Warburton, that it must be a glorious thing to be clever?"

"Not being clever myself, I am hardly in a position to judge," answered Gerald, amused at the girl's earnestness. "But if we common-

place people only knew it, I have no doubt that cleverness has its disadvantages, like every other exceptional quality. Besides, it would not do for us all to be clever: in that case the world would soon become intolerable. I think a moderate quantity of brains, and a large amount of contentment, is the best stock-in-trade to get through life with."

"Hear! hear!" cried Byrne, from his easy-chair. "My sentiments exactly."

Miriam looked gloomy. "Now you are making fun of me," she said.

"No, indeed," returned Gerald, earnestly.

"I don't know why the girl should always be raving about wanting to be clever," said Byrne, addressing himself to Gerald. "She has plenty of good looks, and ought to be content. Five women out of six have neither brains nor good looks—though they will never believe that they haven't got the latter," added the old cynic, under his breath.

"Oh, yes, I know that I'm good-looking," said Miriam, naïvely, but not without a touch of bitterness. "People have told me that ever since I can remember anything. Besides, I can see it for myself in the glass," with an involuntary glance at the Venetian mirror hanging opposite.

"Then why are you always dissatisfied—always flying in the face of Providence?" growled Byrne. "What are your good looks given you for, but that some man with plenty of money may fall in love with you, and make you his wife?"

"Why not send me to the slave-market at Constantinople?" said Miriam, bitterly. "I daresay that I should fetch a tolerable price there."

Gerald thought it time to change the conversation.

"Do you come in contact at all with Van Duren?" he said to Byrne.

"We have seen more of him to-day than we saw yesterday, and more of him yesterday than previously. He is gradually learning to overcome the native bashfulness of his disposition," added Byrne, with a sneer.

"Then he has not shrouded himself altogether from view?" said Gerald.

"Not a bit of it. What he would have done had I been living here with a wife instead of a daughter, I can't say. But the fact is, he seems inclined to admire Miriam."

The old man sat staring at Gerald with a twinkle in his eye, as he finished speaking. Gerald was at a loss to know in what way it was expected that he should greet such an item of news. So he merely fell back on a safe, though unmeaning, "Oh, indeed!"

But Miriam, gazing into the fire, either had not heard, or did not heed her father's words.

"For the sort of ursa major that he is," resumed Byrne, "he doesn't conduct himself so much amiss. Has not been much used to ladies' society, I should say. Does not talk much, but likes to look and listen."

"Then you have had him in here!" said Gerald, with surprise.

"Yes, twice. There's the magnet"—pointing to Miriam. "It isn't me, bless you, not me," added the old man, with a chuckle, as he proceeded to poke the fire vigorously.

To say that Gerald was mystified is to say no more than the truth. But it was evident that whatever Byrne might have to tell him with regard to his plans and purposes, he was not inclined to tell yet, and Gerald could not question him.

"Does Mr. Van Duren keep up a large establishment?" he said.

"No: a small one. Everything on a miserly scale. Every item of expenditure cut down to the lowest possible point."

"Perhaps he is poor."

"Poor! my dear sir. Tcha! When did you ever know a money-lender to be poor?"

"But I did not know that Van Duren was a money-lender."

"That's what he is: neither more nor less."

"Then, in that case, he must be a man of capital?"

"Certainly, to some extent. But you never know how the webs of such spiders as he interlace and cross each other. Perhaps he is only used as a decoy to catch foolish flies for bigger and older spiders than himself. But, in any case, you may be sure that he comes in for a full share of the plunder."

"From what you have said, I presume that he is unmarried?"

"There are no signs of a wife under this roof," said Byrne. "Besides himself, there is, in the office, first, his clerk, Pringle—a drunken, disreputable old vagabond enough, from what I have seen of him; and secondly, a youth of fifteen, to copy letters and run errands, and so on. Then, downstairs, in a dungeon below the level of the street, we have Bakewell and his wife, as custodians of the premises and personal attendants on Van Duren—a harmless, ignorant couple enough. These, with Miriam and myself, make up the sum total of the establishment. Pringle and the boy, I may add, do not sleep on the premises."

"Are you acquainted with Mr. Van Duren?" asked Miriam, suddenly lifting her eyes from the fire.

"I have not that honour," said Gerald, drily.

"There is a great deal of power about him," said Miriam, "and I like power in a man. He seems to me a man who would stand at nothing in working out his own ends either for good or evil. For women—weak women—such characters generally have a peculiar fascination."

"That's because you never have a will of your own for an hour

together," said Byrne. "Women always admire what they possess least of themselves."

"Papa always runs the ladies down," said Miriam, smilingly, to Gerald. "But if only one-half that I have heard whispered be true, no one could be fonder of their society than he was, so long as he was young and good-looking."

"And now that he is neither ——?" said Byrne.

"No one delights to run them down more than he. The old story, Mr. Warburton. Olives have no longer any flavour for him, therefore only fools eat olives."

Gerald rose and made his adieux. It was arranged that he should call again on the following Tuesday or Wednesday.

"You won't forget the tickets for the opera, will you, Mr. Warburton?" were Miriam's whispered words as they stood for a moment at the street door, she having gone downstairs to let him out.

"Well, kitten, and what do you think of your new-found brother?" asked Byrne, as soon as Miriam got back into the room.

"I like him. It would be impossible to help liking him," said Miriam.

"Your reasons—if you have any."

"Ladies are not supposed to give reasons. I like him because I like him. For one thing, he is not commonplace. There is an air of cleverness about him. You would not feel a bit surprised if at any moment he were to tell you that he was the author of the last celebrated poem, or the painter of the last great picture, or that he had been down the crater of Vesuvius, or invented a new balloon that would take you half-way to the moon. By the time you have been in Mr. Warburton's society ten minutes, you say to yourself: 'Here's a man who has brains.'"

"Rather different from James Baron, Esq., eh?"

"Now, papa!" said Miriam, in a hurt tone. Then she turned from him and went to the window, and drew aside the curtain, and peered out into the darkness. "I thought it was understood between us that on this point there was no longer to be any contention. I thought you thoroughly understood, papa, that nothing could alter my determination."

"Oh, you have made me understand all that plainly enough," said Byrne. "But when I think how mad and foolish you are—how determined you are to throw away your one great chance in life, I can't help ——"

"Pray spare me, papa! Why cover ground that you and I have trodden so often already?"

"To think," said Byrne, indignantly, "of my daughter demeaning herself to marry a common, underpaid clerk."

"Yes, a clerk whose father is a dean; and who was educated at college, and ——"

"And who was expelled from college for ——"

"Papa, for shame! Is his one fault to stick to him through life?"

"Even his own people discard him."

"Let them do so. He will make his way in spite of them. He is a gentleman bred and born."

"A gentleman, forsooth!"

"Yes—a gentleman who has bound himself to marry a ballet girl: for that's what I am. Neither more nor less than a ballet girl!"

"Had it not been for my misfortunes ——"

"We need not speak of them, papa. But, was it a wise thing on your part to expose me to all the temptations of a theatre?"

"I had every confidence in the strength of your principles."

"Had you known one tithe of the temptations to which I was exposed, you might well have trembled for me. Why, the very last night I was at the Royal Westminster there was a note left for me at the stage door and a splendid bouquet, and inside the bouquet was this." As Miriam spoke, she extracted from her watch-pocket a ring set with five or six costly brilliants, and handed it to her father.

"You are not going to wear this!" he said, looking up at her with sudden suspicion.

"You ought to know me better, papa, than to ask such a question."

"Do you know from whom it came?"

"It would not be difficult to find out, I daresay."

"Then why have you not sent the ring back?"

"Because I mean the sender of it to pay for his folly. You remember my telling you how little Rose Montgomery broke her leg at the theatre the other week, through falling down a trap. She is little more than a child, and has not another friend than myself in all London. I am going to ask James to sell the ring for me. I shall give Rose the money. It will keep her when she comes out of the hospital till she is strong enough to begin dancing again."

"James! James! how I hate to hear the name!" said Byrne, as he got up and left the room.

"It is the name of the man I love—of the man whose wife I am going to be," replied Miriam. Then she sat down and began to cry.

CHAPTER XIV.

FLOATING WITH THE STREAM.

LADY DUDGEON'S morning-room in Harley Street. At her davenport near the window, pen in hand, sat her ladyship, where, indeed, she was to be found at eleven a.m. six mornings out of seven. On the ridge of her high nose was perched the double gold-rimmed eye-glass which

she had taken to wearing of late in the privacy of the family circle, but the existence of which, outside that circle, was kept a profound secret. On a low chair close by, in a pretty morning-dress, sat Eleanor Lloyd. London life and London hours were beginning to tell upon her already. There was a look of weariness in her eyes, and her cheeks had lost a little of that fresh, delicate bloom which she had brought with her from the country, but which cannot exist long in the atmosphere of Belgravian ball-rooms.

At Lady Dudgeon's elbow stood Olive Deane, with her black dress, her snowy collar and cuffs, her colourless face, her black, lustreless hair, and her fathomless eyes—in every point precisely the same as at the time when first we met her. Her ladyship had just been issuing invitations for a grand ball to be given at Stammars during the ensuing Easter recess, to Sir Thomas's chief supporters at the recent election.

"There, thank goodness, that finishes the last batch of twenty!" said her ladyship, as she put down her pen with an air of relief. "I don't think that I have forgotten anyone, or, for the matter of that, invited anyone that we could have afforded to ignore. There are eighty of them altogether, leaving out of question the tribe of wives and daughters: quite as many as we can reasonably accommodate." Then turning to Olive, she added, "Will you kindly see that the whole of the invitations are sent off by this afternoon's post?"

"I will take care to post them myself. Has your ladyship any further commands?"

"None whatever at present, thank you." Olive bowed and left the room.

"On such an occasion as the present one Miss Deane is really invaluable," said Lady Dudgeon to Eleanor.

"If you would only let me help you in those little matters, instead of Miss Deane, you would please me more than I can tell you."

"My dear child, I could not think of such a thing," said her ladyship, with dignity. "I did not bring you to London to make a drudge of you: I brought you here that you might enjoy yourself."

"I should enjoy myself far better if I had a little more to do sometimes. I might as well be a china figure under a glass shade in the drawing-room, for any use I seem to be in the world."

"My dear, all pretty objects have their uses in the world, if it be only to please the eye and educate the taste of others. Be satisfied at present with trying to look as pretty as you can."

"That seems to me a very empty sort of life indeed."

"Ah, you young people never know what you would be at. You, for instance, my dear, have youth, good looks, and money, and yet you grumble! But about this ball. I mean it to be a great success. It will make Sir Thomas even more popular in the borough than he is now, and no one can stigmatize it as being either bribery or corruption.

There is some talk of a general election next autumn, so that we must keep our supporters well in hand."

"You are quite a tactician," laughed Eleanor.

"In these days, my dear, it doesn't do to let one's wits grow rusty. You will derive great amusement at the ball from a study of the toilettes of some of the worthy tradespeople's wives and daughters who will honour us with their company. The originality of idea displayed by some of them is truly astounding. And the waistcoats of the gentlemen are hardly less wonderful."

At this moment a footman brought a letter for her ladyship.

"What a charming surprise, my dear!" she said, as she glanced over it. "Invitations for a private concert at Lady Camperdown's. Most exclusive. That sweet Lady Camperdown! There will be a carpet-dance afterwards. I must write off at once and order our dresses."

"But surely, Lady Dudgeon, one of the ten or fifteen dresses that I have already would do for such an occasion."

"My dear Eleanor! Go to Lady Camperdown's concert in a dress that you have ever worn before! Such a thing is not to be thought of. It would not be doing your duty in that state of life to which it has pleased Providence to call you." Here her ladyship looked at her watch. "My dear, I expect Captain Dayrell here about twelve, and I should like you to change your dress before he arrives. He told me last evening that he wanted to see me to-day, so I asked him to call early, as I am going shopping immediately after luncheon."

"But Captain Dayrell is coming to see you, Lady Dudgeon. There is no occasion for him to see me."

"He is coming to see me, it is true; but I rather suspect it is about a matter that intimately concerns you."

"Indeed! But I really cannot see in what way Captain Dayrell's visit can concern me."

"It may concern you very nearly. I have every reason to believe that Captain Dayrell is coming here this morning to ask my sanction to his making you a formal offer of marriage."

"To make me an offer of marriage! You must be jesting."

"I was never more serious in my life. You could not fail to see with what attention Captain Dayrell treated you at the ball the other evening. And on the two or three previous occasions when he has met you in society, there has been an empressement in his manner which has led me to suspect that he was only waiting to see a little more of you before making up his mind to ask you to become his wife."

"Only waiting to see a little more of me! I am overwhelmed by Captain Dayrell's preference."

"Don't try to be sarcastic, Eleanor. Sarcasm in young people is little less than odious."

Eleanor rose. There was a heightened colour in her cheeks, an added brightness in her eyes. "Lady Dudgeon, should Captain Dayrell come here this morning on such an errand as the one you have mentioned, you can give him his congé as soon as you please. And I beg that you will not send for me, as I shall certainly decline to see him."

"Tut tut, child! you don't know what you are talking about. A little maidenly shyness is all very nice and proper, especially when the offer is a first one. But prudery may be carried too far; and, in the case of Captain Dayrell, a pretended rejection might perhaps frighten him away altogether."

"A pretended rejection, Lady Dudgeon! I fail to understand you."

"It was very foolish on my part," said her ladyship, complacently, without noticing the interruption, "to mention the subject to you at all. I have only succeeded in startling you. I ought to have left Captain Dayrell to plead his own cause with you. Gentlemen, on such occasions, are generally very eloquent after they have made the first plunge."

"I am sorry that you should so persistently misunderstand me," said Eleanor, not without a touch of impatience. "You compel me to speak plainly, and in a way that is most repugnant to my feelings. Under no circumstances could I agree to become the wife of Captain Dayrell. And I trust there will be no necessity for his name ever to be mentioned between us again."

Lady Dudgeon turned slowly round on her chair, and surveyed Eleanor through her eye-glass as though she could hardly believe the evidence of her ears. "You cannot marry Captain Dayrell, Eleanor Lloyd?" she said, with some severity of tone. "May I ask what there is to prevent your marrying him? I hope there is no prior engagement in the case, of which I have been kept in ignorance."

"Were I engaged to anyone, your ladyship would certainly not be kept in ignorance of the fact."

"Instead of engagement, I ought, perhaps, to have used the word 'attachment.'"

"Applied to me, one word would be just as incorrect as the other."

"Then may I ask what particular objection you can have to receive the addresses of Captain Dayrell?"

"My particular objection is that I could never care sufficiently for Captain Dayrell to become his wife."

"I certainly gave you credit for more common sense, Eleanor, than to think that you would allow any foolish sentiment to stand in the way of your proper settlement in life. My theory is this—and I daresay, when you shall have lived as long in the world as I have, you will agree that it is by no means a bad theory—that any girl who has been correctly brought up, and whose affections have not been tampered

with, can school herself, without much difficulty, to look with affectionate eyes on whatever suitor her relations or friends may offer to her notice as eligible, in their estimation, to make her happy: and a really good girl will always find half her own happiness in the knowledge that she is making others happy at the same time."

"In a matter involving consequences so serious I should prefer to make my own choice."

"No doubt you would," said her ladyship, drily. "But if young ladies would only be guided by the choice of their best friends, rather than by their own headstrong wills, we should hear far less about unhappy marriages and the evils they bring." To this Eleanor made no answer. "Most people would agree with me, my dear, that you ought to consider yourself a very lucky girl to have drawn such a prize as Captain Dayrell. A man still young—he can't be more than three or four and thirty—handsome, accomplished, of an excellent family—he is first cousin to Lord Coniston—immensely rich, and of such an easy, good-natured disposition that any woman of tact would soon learn to twine him round her finger: what more could any reasonable being wish for?"

"Does affection count for nothing in your estimate of marriage, Lady Dudgeon?"

"Oh, my dear, you may depend upon it that if there is no prior attachment, you would soon learn to like him. Captain Dayrell is generally looked upon as a most fascinating man in society."

"Captain Dayrell may be all that you say he is," replied Eleanor, "but for all that, he can never be anything more to me than he is at the present moment."

"So be it. The likes and dislikes of young ladies are among the unaccountable things of this world. But I cannot help saying that your point-blank refusal even to see Captain Dayrell is a great disappointment to me."

"Do not say that, dear Lady Dudgeon!" cried Eleanor, and with that she took the elder lady's hand in hers, and pressed it to her lips, and then nestled down on the little footstool by her knees. "Believe me, I am not ungrateful, not insensible to the kindness which prompted you to take an obscure country girl by the hand, and treat her more as a daughter of your own than anything else. But I cannot tell you how sorry I am to find that you should so far have misunderstood me as to think that you were doing me a kindness in endeavouring to secure for me the attentions of Captain Dayrell."

"It is certainly a great disappointment to me," said Lady Dudgeon, with a sigh. "I had really set my heart on you and Captain Dayrell making a match of it."

"But cannot you understand that I have no wish to get married, nor any intention of changing my name for a long time to come—if ever?"

"Well, well, child; I only hope that what you say is right, and that there is indeed no prior attachment. But be careful that you do not fall into the hands of some swindling adventurer—of some romantic rogue, with a handsome face and a wheedling tongue, who, while persuading you that he loves you for yourself alone, cares, in reality, for nothing but the money you will bring him. The world abounds with such men. Be warned, or you may have to repent when repentance will be of no avail."

"Ah, Lady Dudgeon! if I were not an heiress, what a happy girl I should be!"

"Child, you talk like a lunatic."

"It may be so, but this money weighs me down as though it were a millstone about my neck. And how sadly wise in the ways of the world I seem to have become in a few short months! Friendship—service—affection—I feel, nowadays, as if these treasures were offered me, not for myself, but simply because I am a little rich. In the old, happy days at home, before ever I dreamed of being an heiress, no such doubt ever crossed my mind. Friendship and love—my father's love—were mine: as freely and fully mine as the lilies that grew by the mill-pond brim, or the canary that woke me every morning with its song. But indeed, dear Lady Dudgeon, I am in no wise fitted for a life of fashionable pleasure. My tastes are too homely. Life seems to me far too real, far too earnest, to be frittered away in a perpetual round of balls and parties, of morning calls and drives in the Park. When I think of the poverty and wretchedness that I see on every side of me, every time I stir out of doors, and then of all those useless thousands that are said to be mine, I feel ashamed of myself, and think, with sorrow, how utterly I am living for myself alone. Oh, Lady Dudgeon! if you wish to make me happy, be my almoner; teach me how to employ, for the benefit of my poorer sisters and their little ones, that wealth which came to me so unexpectedly, and which I so little deserve. Teach me to do this, and you will make me happy indeed!"

Lady Dudgeon took a sniff at her salts before she spoke. "My dear Eleanor," she said at last, "if all people of wealth and social standing held the same terrible notions that you do, we should have chaos back again in a very little while. Your mind has been badly trained, child, and we must endeavour to eradicate the noxious weeds one by one. Meanwhile, you will be all the better for this little outburst, and I am not in the least offended by what you have said. And now as regards your costume for Lady Camperdown's concert. I think the new shade of green would harmonise admirably with your style and complexion. As for myself, I shall wear ——" But at this juncture the door opened, and in came Sir Thomas with a budget of news, so the all-important subject of dress was put aside for the

time being, to be discussed with due solemnity at a more fitting opportunity.

On the Friday following this scene Sir Thomas and Lady Dudgeon, accompanied by Miss Lloyd, went, by invitation, to spend a week at the house of an old family friend at Richmond. On Saturday morning certain important papers reached Gerald, who had been left in charge of matters in Harley Street, which necessitated an immediate consultation with Sir Thomas. Off by the next train hurried Gerald to Richmond: where he found Sir Thomas, in company with his friend Mr. Cromer, smoking a mild cheroot, in a garden-house that looked on to the river. Liking Gerald's manner and appearance, Mr. Cromer would insist upon his staying to dinner. Presently the ladies came sailing across the lawn—Lady Dudgeon, Miss Cromer, and Miss Lloyd; and then they all walked down to the edge of the river, where lay moored a pretty little boat, named *Cora*, in honour of Miss Cromer. The weather was warm and sunny for the time of year, and the river looked quite gay, so numerous were the tiny craft which the bright day had coaxed out after their long winter sleep.

"How delightful it would be to go on the river this afternoon!" said Miss Cromer.

"I should like it above all things," replied Miss Lloyd.

"I wish Charley were here to take us for a row," alluding to her brother. "How coquettish my boat looks this afternoon! How she seems to woo us to take her out for a spin!"

Gerald lifted his hat. "I believe that I can handle a pair of oars as awkwardly as most people," he said, with a smile. "If you will trust yourselves to my care, I will promise to bring you back—either alive or dead."

The young ladies vowed that it would be delicious. The elder ladies disapproved faintly, on the ground that there would be a cold breeze on the river, but were overruled. Mr. Cromer waddled back to the house to get some shawls and wraps, and Gerald handed the young ladies into the boat.

In the result, however, Miss Cromer had to be left behind. At the last moment she was seized with her old complaint, palpitation of the heart, and her mother would not let her go. Eleanor would have stayed with her, but both Mr. and Mrs. Cromer insisted upon her going. It did not require much persuasion to make Gerald take them at their word. She had hardly ceased protesting that she would much rather stay with dear Cora, when she found herself in the middle of the stream, and all conversation with those on shore impossible.

"Now, Miss Lloyd, will you kindly take charge of the tiller-ropes?" said Gerald, decisively. "I presume you know how to use them?"

"I ought to know," said Eleanor. "I had a great deal of practice with them when poor papa and I used to go out boating together."

It wanted half an hour of high water, and the tide was still running up strongly. Gerald put the boat's head up stream, and pulled gently along towards Twickenham. He blessed the happy fortune that, for one delicious hour, had given him Eleanor all to himself. But now that the opportunity was his, what should he talk to her about? He felt that he ought to be at once witty and tender; that now, if ever, he ought to rise above the commonplace level of every-day conversation. He felt all this, and yet he felt, at the same time, that he had nothing to say. If he might only have opened the flood-gates of his heart, then, indeed, there would have been no lack of words—no necessity to hunt here and there in his brain for something to talk about. It is true that he might have begun about the weather, or some other equally simple topic; but, then, any nincompoop could have done that, and to-day he wanted so particularly to shine in the eyes of his goddess! But before long it became quite evident that he was not to shine to-day. He must rest contentedly on the level of the nincompoops, and trust to his good fortune that Miss Lloyd would not find out that he was a bigger donkey than the rest of the gentlemen who were in the habit of laying themselves out to fascinate her.

But Miss Lloyd herself seemed to have very little to say this afternoon. It seemed pleasure enough just then to sit quietly in the sweet sunshine, and dip her ungloved hand now and again in the cool ripples of the tide.

"Have you ever been as far up the Thames as this before?" asked Gerald at last, in sheer desperation.

"I was never on the Thames in a small boat before to-day," answered Eleanor.

"There are some lovely nooks on it—so thoroughly English, you know: altogether unlike anything of the kind that you can see anywhere else."

"I have been so little abroad lately that I am hardly competent to judge what kind of scenery is thoroughly English, or what is not."

Another awkward silence. "What a goose he must think me! It seems so stupid not to be able to talk except in answer to a question," said Eleanor to herself. "Why do I feel so different when I am with *him* from what I do when I'm with anyone else? I never felt like this when I was alone with Captain Dayrell. If Cora had come with us we should have been lively enough." And yet, in her heart, how glad she was that Cora had not come! "Whether this scenery is English or not, it is very beautiful," said Eleanor at last, with a desperate resolve to break the spell that was weaving itself more strongly around them with every moment. "One can see where spring's delicate brush has been at work here and there among the trees, rubbing-in the first faint tint of green. How lovely it is!"

"If this sunshine would only last, and the tide not tire of running

up," said Gerald, "I feel that I could go on like this for a week, and not feel weary."

"You are an Englishman, Mr. Pomeroy, and I am afraid that you would soon begin to cry out for your dinner."

"Would not the gods feed us, and have a care of us? To-day we are their children. I feel that I have but to summon Hebe, and she would come and wait upon us."

"For my part, Minerva is the only one of the divinities whom I should care to summon."

"So much wisdom would surely overweight our little boat."

"But are we not rather short of ballast just at present?" asked Eleanor, slily.

"Possibly so; but Minerva would certainly overbalance us. I should greatly prefer the company of a certain juvenile, whom Schiller terms *der lächelorde Knabe:* he would make the proper ballast for such a voyage as ours."

"When I was at school in Germany they never would let us read Schiller," said Eleanor, demurely. "How happy those swans look!" she added, a moment afterwards, as if to change the subject.

"Yes," said Gerald, "they find their happiness as certain people one sometimes meets with find theirs—in groping about amongst the mud—seeking what they can devour."

"And yet how graceful they are!"

"They are graceful enough as long as they are in their proper element. Out of it, they are as ungraceful as a scullion-maid in a drawing-room. And yet, I daresay that if they can think at all, they think that they look far more graceful during their perambulations ashore than ever they do in the water. But, then, how many of us think the same thing!"

"Why you are quite a cynic, Mr. Pomeroy. But it is considered fashionable nowadays for young men to be cynical, and one must be in the fashion, you know."

Gerald laughed a little dismally. "I tasted the bitters of life at so early an age that I suppose the flavour of them still clings to my palate."

"Pardon me if I have hurt your feelings!" said Eleanor, earnestly. "I certainly did not intend to do so. But see, the tide is on the turn, and we must turn with it."

"Have we not time to go a little further? the afternoon is still young."

"Yes, you shall row me round yonder tiny island, that looks so pretty from here; and then we must really go back."

When they had rounded the islet, said Eleanor: "I am sure you must be tired, Mr. Pomeroy. Suppose you ship your oars and let the tide float us gently down."

"I am not in the least tired; but, being a good boy, I like to do as I am bidden." Cunning Gerald knew that by floating down with the stream he should have half an hour more of Eleanor's society than if he had used his oars ever so gently.

"Going back is not nearly so nice as going up stream," he remarked.

"What makes you think so?"

"Because our voyage will so soon be at an end."

"But, when you have landed me, there will be no objection to your having the boat out for as many hours as you like."

"And make a water hermit of myself. I scarcely think that I am sufficiently fond of my own company to care for that. I like solitude, but I must have some one to share it with me. The sweetest solitude is that where two people, whose tastes and sympathies are in accord, shut themselves out from the rest of the world (as you and I are shut out on this silent highway) to find in the society of each other a truer and more complete satisfaction than in aught else this earth can offer."

"Is not that a rather selfish view to take of life and its duties?" asked Eleanor.

"Is it not possible to live in the world and yet be not of it?" he returned—"to do our daily tasks there, and yet have an inner sanctuary to flee to, of which no one but ourselves shall possess the key, and against whose walls the noise and turmoil of the world shall dash themselves in vain?"

"You would have to be very particular in your choice of a companion to share such a solitude with you, otherwise the demon of Ennui would soon make a third in your company."

"Ennui can never intrude itself between two people whose tastes and sympathies thoroughly agree. Four times out of six ennui means neither more nor less than vacuity of brain."

Eleanor laughed. "Next time I am troubled with it I shall know how to call it by its proper name.—I declare if there isn't dear Lady Dudgeon looking out for us with a shawl over her head!"

Her ladyship received them very graciously; but then Mr. Pomeroy was a special favourite with her. "I am glad you have had the good sense to get back early," she said. "The river-damps are said to be very dangerous after sunset."

Not the slightest suspicion of any possible danger to her protégée ever entered her mind. Had anyone even hinted at such a thing, she would have replied indignantly that Miss Lloyd, who had refused the addresses of Captain Dayrell, was not at all likely to fall in love with Sir Thomas Dudgeon's secretary. She judged Eleanor, in fact, by what she herself had been at the same age. She had been brought up to believe that for any young lady to throw herself away simply for love was next door to a crime. As it was totally out of the question that she herself could have ever fallen in love with any man who was

without wealth or position, or both, so would it have been utterly inconceivable to her that her darling Miss Lloyd could ever sink to a level which would render possible any act of social degradation.

CHAPTER XV.

A QUIET CUP OF TEA.

TICKETS for the opera reached Miriam Byrne, in due course, on the morning of the Friday following Gerald Warburton's first visit to the house of Max Van Duren in Spur Alley. Saturday was Miriam's birthday. Beyond an extra kiss from Mr. Byrne, and the expression of good wishes usual on such an occasion, the day brought little or no difference to either father or daughter. The weather was unpleasant, and neither of them stirred out of doors. But when tea time came the best china was brought out of its retirement, and from some mysterious cupboard was produced a Madeira cake with a little jar of honey and some potted shrimps.

"Now, papa dear, draw up to the table," cried Miriam, gaily, as soon as everything had been arranged in order due.

"I've put an extra spoonful of green into the pot in order to please you, and if you behave yourself nicely, you shall have an extra lump of sugar in your cup, for you are as fond of sweet things as any schoolgirl."

"That's why I'm so fond of you, dear," said Mr. Byrne, drily, as he drew his chair up to the table.

Just then came a knock at the door. Miriam opened it, and there stood Mr. Van Duren, with a pretty little rustic basket in his hands, full of freshly-cut flowers.

"Good evening, Miss Byrne," he said, in a hesitating sort of way. "I happened to hear Mrs. Bakewell remark this morning, that to-day was your birthday. Such being the case, I have taken the liberty of bringing you these few flowers, of which I beg your acceptance, together with my very best wishes for your health and happiness."

"It is very kind of you, Mr. Van Duren—very kind indeed," replied Miriam. "Many thanks for your flowers and good wishes. But pray come inside." He came a few steps into the room, and then Miriam took the basket and smelled at the flowers. "They are indeed lovely," she said. "Yours is the only present that I have had to-day, and nothing else that you could have offered me would have been half so acceptable."

The moment he heard the knock, Peter Byrne collapsed, as it were, and became older by a score years in as many seconds. Deaf and senile, he now tottered across the room, his walking-stick in one hand, the other hand held to his ear.

"What is it? what is it?" he quavered. "Flowers, eh? Vastly pretty—vastly pretty."

"Mr. Van Duren has brought me these lovely flowers as a birthday present, papa," said Miriam, speaking loudly in his ear.

"Very kind of him—very kind indeed," nodding his head at Miriam. "But come in, Mr. Van Duren, come in, sir. Pussy and I were just about to have a quiet cup of tea. Come and join us, sir, come and join us. I like a quiet cup of tea: so does Pussy."

"I should be most happy, if I thought ——"

"If you thought you were not intruding," said Miriam. "You are not doing that, I assure you. See, I will give your flowers the place of honour on my tea-table. But perhaps you are not a tea drinker—perhaps ——"

"Oh, yes, I am. Only I never can bear to drink tea alone. I think it a great promoter of sociability, and I only indulge in it when I have some one to keep me company."

"Then come and keep me company for once," said Miriam, with a smile, her magnificent eyes looking full into his face. He shrank a little before that full-orbed gaze. For a moment or two the colour left his lips. He smiled faintly, and rubbed his hands together, as though he were cold.

"If I had the inclination to refuse, which indeed I have not," he said, "it would be impossible for me to do so after such an invitation. I can quite imagine that your life here is a little dull at times," he added, as he drew a chair up to the table.

"It certainly cannot be called a very lively one," returned Miriam, as she began to pour out the tea. "Poor dear papa is both very old and very feeble, and then his deafness is a great drawback, and makes home duller than it would otherwise be."

"But you have a brother, have you not?"

"Yes, one brother."

"In the City?"

"No, not in the City. He is secretary to a gentleman at the West End."

Peter Byrne, after sniffing once or twice at the flowers, toddled back to his easy-chair by the fire, and spreading his handkerchief over his knees, waited patiently for his tea. This Miriam now took to him, placing it on a little low table in front of him. "Good girl, good girl," he said. Then turning suddenly on Van Duren, he added: "When I was a young spark, I always liked to have a flower in my button-hole. The girls used to beg them of me—bless their pretty eyes! I daresay the young hussies nowadays do the very same thing."

Max Van Duren, at this time, was fifty years old. He was not very tall, but broad-set and strongly built. His coarse, short-cut, sandy hair showed as yet few traces of age. His face, for some reason, in the

last few days he had closely shaven, so that whatever character there was in it could be clearly seen without the disguise of beard or moustache. A massive jaw; a close-shut mouth, with its straight line of thin lips; heavy, overhanging eyebrows, and small, deep-set eyes of a cold steel-gray: such were the prominent features of a face that was full of power, self-will, and obstinacy. His ears were pierced, but the small gold rings he had worn in them when a young man had been discarded years ago. Professional beggars are generally pretty good students of facial character, and no member of that fraternity had ever been known to solicit alms from Max Van Duren.

He had not been used to female society, and he felt himself altogether out of his element, as he sat at the tea-table and was waited upon by Miriam.

Miss Byrne had not had her magnificent eyes given her for nothing. Very early in life she had learned how to make use of them. After that one full, unveiled look into Van Duren's eyes when she invited him to take tea with her, she kept her own eyes carefully under subjection. He could not keep his away from her, a fact of which Miriam was perfectly conscious; but now that she had got him there, seated opposite to her, she seemed to have become all at once shy, timid, and all but speechless. Now and then he caught a momentary, half-startled glance aimed at him from under the shadow of her long lashes, but that was all. She seemed to turn her eyes anywhere, rather than look him full in the face. He was quite at a loss what to say. What bond of sympathies, tastes, or ideas, as he asked himself, could there be in common between a man like him and that charming creature opposite? There were a great many subjects that he knew a great deal about, but he could not call to mind one that would be likely to have the faintest possible interest for Miss Byrne. Still it was requisite that he should say something, or she would think him no better company than a mummy.

He looked round the room: there were a number of books scattered about. "Are you fond of reading, Miss Byrne?" he asked suddenly: as good an opening, under the circumstances, as he could possibly have found.

"Yes, very—when I can get the sort of book I like."

"May I ask what sort of book it is that you do like?"

"Oh, novels of course: a sort of literature for which, I daresay, you care nothing."

"Well, I am certainly not a novel-reader. But, were I a young lady, I daresay I should be. You like love-stories, of course?"

"Yes: love-stories. Having had no experience in that line myself, it is only natural that I should like to read about it in others."

"I thought that all young ladies nowadays could graduate and take honours in the Art of Love long before they were twenty."

"A rule is proved by its exceptions. I am one of the exceptions."

"How nice it must be to be able to write love-stories that you know will be read by some thousands of young ladies!"

"But if an author in every case writes only from his own experience, what a fearful experience must be his!"

"I apprehend that in such a case a writer is like a clever violinist. He may play to the public on one string as long as he likes, if only his variations are sufficiently amusing not to weary them."

"Yes, I daresay there is really a very great sameness in such matters," said Miriam, with a well-feigned simplicity.

"And yet I suppose it hardly matters how poor a love-story may be; the vivid imagination of your sex supplies all deficiencies, and clothes it with whatever warmth and colour it may otherwise lack."

"I am not so sure on that point. But I am afraid you are getting beyond my depth, Mr. Van Duren. For my own part, I have not much imagination. I am very, very matter-of-fact."

"That ought to form a bond of sympathy between us, seeing that I am one of the most matter-of-fact people in the City of London."

"I have been told that bonds of sympathy are very dangerous things. Papa's Three-per-cent. bonds would be a much safer investment."

Van Duren laughed. "How would it be, Miss Byrne, if I were to go through a course of reading under your tuition?"

"Do you mean the reading of love-stories?"

"That, and nothing else, is what I mean."

"How would it be possible for me to act as your tutor in such a course of reading when I don't know the alphabet of the language myself?"

"How would it be if we were to try to learn the alphabet together?"

"I am afraid that I am too old to learn a fresh language. Besides, if you are as ignorant as you say you are, we should not know the proper sounds to give to the different letters."

"Nature would be our schoolmistress. With her to teach us, we should soon become apt scholars."

"Very well. We will have our first lesson on Monday. But before we begin you shall go and bowl your hoop a dozen times round the square at the bottom of the street, and I will sit on a doorstep, with a doll in my arms, and watch you."

All at once Peter Byrne, who for the last ten minutes had been gazing intently into the fire, and neither stirring nor speaking, turned in his chair and said to Miriam: "Go up to your room, Pussy, for a little while: I want to have a little private talk with Mr. Van Duren."

Miriam rose. "Shall I not see you again?" asked Van Duren. "Yes," whispered Miriam. Then she crossed to the basket of flowers, plucked a spray, placed it in the bosom of her dress, smiled at Van Duren, and went.

Van Duren's face lost its brightness as soon as Miriam left the room. He crossed to Byrne's chair, laid his coarse hand on the old man's shoulder, and said, not without a touch of sternness: "I am at your service, sir."

He was obliged to speak in a louder tone of voice than usual, and that of itself annoyed him.

"Sit down, Mr. Van Duren—sit down close beside me. I have something to say to you. But are you sure that we are quite alone?"

"We are quite alone, Mr. Byrne.

"Good." He said no more for a minute or two, but fumbled nervously with his handkerchief, and still kept his eyes fixed intently on the fire. Then he had a little fit of coughing. When that was over, and he had recovered his breath, he laid his hand on Mr. Van Duren's wrist and spoke. "We can't expect to live for ever, Mr. Van Duren—eh?"

"I suppose not," said Mr. Van Duren, with a sneer; "and I for one would certainly not care to do so."

"Are you one of those people who think that a man's likely to die any the sooner for having made his will?"

"Certainly not. I am no believer in such foolish superstitions."

"When a man has anything to leave—when he has any dispositions to make with regard to his property, it is best not to drive them off to the last moment—eh?"

"It is very foolish to do so, Mr. Byrne. But it is what many people do, for all that."

"Then you think that I should be doing a wise thing if I were to make my will—eh?"

"Certainly—a very wise thing—if you have any property to dispose of."

"If I have any property to dispose of! Ech! ech! ech! If I have any property to dispose of—he says!" He laughed till another fit of coughing nearly choked him, and after that was over he had to gather breath before he could speak again.

"Yes, Mr. Van Duren," he gasped out, "I have a little property to leave behind me—just a little. And I want you, as a business man, to recommend to me some good sound lawyer to whom I could give the requisite instructions for drawing up my last will and testament."

"Oh, if that's all, I can recommend to you my own lawyer, Mr. Billing, who is a thorough business man and would do you justice in every way."

"That's kind of you—very kind. There will be nothing complicated about the affair. There's only two of 'em to leave it to—my boy and my girl. I shall divide it equally between them."

Mr. Van Duren was beginning to feel interested. After all, it was quite possible that this pottering, deaf old fellow might be far better

off than he—Van Duren—had any idea of. "House property? or, land, chiefly, I suppose?" he said, in a casual, off-hand kind of way.

"Not a bit of it," said the old man. "I don't own a single house, nor an acre of land. No, sir, my property is all in scrip and shares—in good sound investments, every penny of it. And the beauty of it is—ech! ech!—that not even my own boy has any idea what I'm worth—what he and his sister will drop in for when the old man's under the turf. I've always kept 'em both in the dark about my money matters—and the best way too. They might want me out of the way, they might wish me dead, if they knew everything. No, no! I've kept my own counsel. I've speculated and speculated, and nobody but my broker and myself has been a bit the wiser."

Mr. Van Duren began to feel quite an affectionate regard for his lodger—leaving out of the question his lodger's daughter.

"Then Miss Byrne is an heiress without knowing it?" he said.

"Mum's the word," chuckled the old man, as he clutched Van Duren by the sleeve. "I'm telling you what I've always kept a secret from them; but there'll be thirty thousand between 'em when I go. Thirty thousand: not a single penny less!"

Van Duren's colour came and went. Miriam, then, would have a fortune of fifteen thousand pounds, respecting which, at present, she knew nothing! Would not the wisest thing he could do be to propose to her and win her consent to become his wife before she became aware of the golden future in store for her? Afterwards it might be too late: she might regard him with altogether different eyes when she knew that her dowry would be fifteen thousand pounds.

"A noble legacy, my dear sir: a truly noble legacy!" said Van Duren, warmly. "And were I in your place I should not lose an unnecessary hour in making my testamentary arrangements. You may depend on it that your mind will feel more settled and easy when you have made everything secure, and put your wishes beyond the possibility of dispute."

"Egad! I'll take your advice; and if you'll send that lawyer of yours on Tuesday, I'll have the job got out of hand at once. I don't suppose I shall live a day less for having made my will—eh?"

"Not you, my dear sir—not you. There are many pleasant days in store for you yet. You are as tough as a bit of seasoned oak."

"Aye, aye. It's not always the youngest ones that are the strongest. Why shouldn't I live to be a hundred?"

"What a noble girl is that daughter of yours, Mr. Byrne!"

"A good girl, sir—a very good girl, though it is I who say it."

"I have never met anyone in my life whom I have learnt to admire so much in so short a time."

"Ah! poor Pussy will feel it when her old father goes. It preys on my mind sometimes when I think of it. What is to become of her,

with her money and her inexperience; and no one to look after her but a brother almost as young and inexperienced as herself?"

"Miss Byrne's fate will probably be that of most other young ladies —she will marry."

"I wish with all my heart that she would: that is, if she would marry the sort of man I should like her to have. But to see her married to some empty-headed, extravagant fop of a fellow, who would squander her money and not make her happy—I could never rest quiet in my grave if that were to happen."

What Van Duren's answer would have been is not upon record, for just at this moment there came a knock at the door, and presently Bakewell's head was intruded into the room. "Beg pardon, sir," he said, carrying a finger to his forehead, "but there's a gentleman downstairs as wants to see you immediately on important business."

"Confound the gentleman, whoever he is!" said Van Duren, with hearty goodwill. "Tell him I'll be down presently." Then turning to Byrne, he added: "We business men can never really call an hour our own. I must ask you to make my excuses to Miss Byrne: I am sorry that I cannot say good-night to her in person."

"It will be your own fault if you don't see her again before long. Come and take a quiet cup of tea with us as often as you like. We are very quiet and very simple, but we shall always be glad to see you. You won't forget the lawyer, will you?"

When Miriam came downstairs a quarter of an hour later, she found her father sitting with his legs perched against the chimney-piece, and smoking his china pipe. He had flung his wig and skull-cap aside, he had relieved himself of his false hump, and he had taken his artificial teeth out of the bureau in which he kept them, and had fitted them carefully into his mouth.

"Miriam," he said, "before you are a week older Max Van Duren will propose marriage to you. I will tell you to-morrow what you are to say when he makes the offer. To-night I am tired. And now mix me a tumbler of grog: the sort of tumbler that you know so well how to mix, my darling."

(*To be continued.*)

THE SYLLABUB FEAST.

"YOU have gone and done a fine thing, Master Johnny Ludlow!"

The salutation came from Clerk Bumford. He was standing at the church door on Sunday morning, looking out as if he expected me, his face pale and stern. I had run on betimes: in fact, before the bell began.

"What have I done, Bumford?"

"Why, you just went and left this here church open last night! You never locked it up! When I come in but now, I found the door right on the latch; never as much as shut!"

Beginning to protest till all was blue that I *had* shut and locked the door—as I knew too well—caution pulled me up, and whispered me to take the blame.

"I'm sure I thought I locked it, Bumford. I never left it unlocked before, and I'll take care I never leave it so again."

"Such a thing as having the church open for a night was never heered of," he grumbled, turning away to ring out the first peal of the bell. "Why, I might have had all my store o' candles stole!—there's nigh a pound on 'em, in here. And my black gownd—and the parson's gownd—and his surplice! Besides the grave-digging tools, and other odds and ends."

Shutting himself into his den underneath the belfry, and tugging fiercely at the cords, the bell tinkled out, warning the parish that it was time to come to morning service. The bell-ringer was a poor old man named Japhet, who was apt to be a little late. Upon which, Bumford would begin the ringing, and blow Japhet up when he came.

Not a soul was yet in church. I went down the middle aisle, softly calling Fred Westerbrook's name. He did not answer; and I went back, hoping to my heart he had got clear away. Nevertheless, I could not shake off the remembrance of my unpleasant dream.

Of all idiots, that Bumford was the worst. Japhet had taken his place at the bell, and he was telling the parson of my sins.

"Right on the latch all the blessed night, sir! We might have found the whole church ransacked out this morning."

Mr. Holland, a mild man, with cares of his own, looked at me with a half smile. "How was it, Johnny?"

"I have assured Bumford, sir, that it shall not happen again. I

certainly thought I had locked it when I took him back the key. No harm has come of it."

"But harm might ha' come," persisted Bumford. "Look at all them candles in there! and the gownds and surplices! Pretty figures we should ha' cut, saving his reverence's presence, with nothing to put upon our backs this here blessed morning!"

"Talking of the key, I missed mine this morning," remarked Mr. Holland. "Have you fetched it away for any purpose, Bumford?"

"What, the tother church key!" exclaimed Bumford. "Not I, sir; I'd not be likely to fetch that key when I've got the tother one—and without your reverence's knowledge either!"

"Well, I cannot find it anywhere," said Mr. Holland.

He went into the vestry with the last words. Close upon that, arrived Shepherd, a folded paper in his hand. It contained a request that Gisby might be prayed for in the Litany.

"What, ain't he dead yet?" asked Bumford.

"No," returned Shepherd. "The doctors be afraid that inflammation's a-setting in now. Any way, he is rare and bad, poor man."

Next came in my set of singers, chiefly boys and girls from the parish school. But they sang better than such children generally sing. Mrs. Todhetley had long taken pains with them, but latterly it had all been upset by Richards' crotchets.

"Now, look here," said I, gathering them before me. "We are not going to have any shrieking to-day. We sing to worship God, you know, and He is in the church with you and hears you; He is not a mile or two away, that you need shout out to be heard all that distance."

"Please, sir, Mr. Richards tells us to sing out loud: as loud as ever we can."

"Well, never mind Mr. Richards to-day. I am going to play, and I tell you to sing softly. If you don't, I shall stop the organ and let you shout by yourselves. You'll not like that. To shout and shriek in church is more irreverent than I care to talk of."

I watched the different groups walk in. Our people were pretty early. When the parson's children came in, Mrs. Holland was with them, so that Edna Blake was enabled to join the singers. Edna had dark circles round her eyes. They looked out at mine with a painful inquiry in their depths.

"Yes, I think it is all right," I nodded in answer.

"Mr. Holland has missed his church key," she whispered. "Coming along to church, Charley suddenly called out that he remembered hiding it in Mr. Fred Westerbrook's coat-pocket. Mrs. Holland seemed quite put out about it, and asked me how I could possibly have allowed *him* to come into the study and sit there."

"There's old Westerbrook, Edna! His face is fiercer than usual."

Mrs. Westerbrook was with him, in a peach-coloured shining silk

gown. And so, one after another, all came in, and the service began. It caused quite a sensation when Mr. Holland made a pause, after turning to the Litany, and read out the announcement: "Your prayers are requested for Walter Gisby, who lies in dangerous extremity." Men's heads moved, and bonnets fluttered.

"How I wish you played for us always, Johnny!" cried Miss Susan Page, looking in upon me, as people passed out from their pews.

"Why, my playing is nothing, Miss Susan!"

"Perhaps not. I don't know. But it has this effect, Johnny—it sends us home with a feeling of peace in our hearts. What with Richards' crashing and the singers' shouting, we are generally turned out in a state of irritation."

I found a large collection in the churchyard. Old Westerbrook was holding forth, on the subject of Fred's iniquities, to the Squire and a numerous audience. Mrs. Westerbrook looked simply malicious.

"No, I do *not* know where he is hiding," said the master of the N. D. Farm in answer to a question. "I wish I did know. I would hang him with all the pleasure in life. An ungrateful, ne'er-do-well, reckless ——What's that, Squire?—You'd recommend me to increase the reward? Why, I *have* increased it. I have doubled it. Old Jones has my orders to post up fresh bills."

"If all's true that's reported, he can't escape very far; he had no money in his pocket," put in young Mr. Stirling, of the Court, who sometimes came over to our church. "Who played to-day?"

"Johnny Ludlow."

"Oh, did you, Johnny?" he said, turning to me. "It was very pleasant. And so was the singing."

"It would have been better worth your hearing had Mrs. Todhetley played—as she was to have done," I said, wishing they'd not bring me up before people, and knowing that my playing was just as simple as it could be, neither florid nor flowery.

"*I* have seen what Frederick Westerbrook was, this many a year past," broke in Mrs. Westerbrook in a loud tone. "Mr. Westerbrook knows that I have given him my opinion again and again. Only he would not listen."

"How could I believe that my own brother's son was the scamp you and Gisby made him out to be?" testily demanded old Westerbrook, who in his way was just as unsophisticated and straightforward as the Squire: and would have been as good-natured, let alone. "I'm sure Fred used to be as steady and dutiful as heart could wish."

"You had better say he is still," said she.

"But, hang it!—I don't say it, ma'am," fired old Westerbrook. "I should be a fool to say it. Unfortunately I *can't* say it. I have lived to find he is everything that's bad—and I say that hanging's too good for him."

Mr. Holland came out of the church and passed us, halting a moment to speak. "I am on my way to pray by poor Gisby," he said, "They have sent for me."

"Help! Thieves! Robbers! Help!"

The shouts came from our yard as we were sitting down to breakfast on Monday morning, and we rushed out. There stood Mack, in the greatest state of excitement possible; his eyes lifted, his arms at work, and his breath gone. The servants ran out too.

"Why! what on earth's the matter, Ben Mack?" demanded the Squire. "Have you gone mad?"

"We've had thieves in the barn, sir! Thieves. All my clothes is stole."

"What clothes?"

"Them what I left in't o' Saturday night, Squire. My smock-frock and my boots, and my spotted cotton neck-handkecher. They be gone, they be."

"Nonsense!" said the Squire, while I and Tod kept our faces. "We have not had thieves here, man."

"But, 'deed, and the things be gone, Squire. Clean gone! Not so much as a shred on 'em left. Please come and see for yourself, sir."

He turned, and went across the yard with hopping strides. The Squire followed, evidently at fault; and the rest of us after him.

"It's a mercy as the horses and the waggins bain't took!" cried Mack. "And the harness! and that there wheelbarrer ——"

"But what do you say *is* taken, Mack?" interrupted the Squire, cutting him short, and looking round the barn.

"All my traps, sir. My best smock-frock; and my boots; and my spotted cotton neck-handkecher. A beautiful pair o' boots, Squire, that I generally keeps here, in case I be sent off to Alcester, or Evesham, or where not, and had to tidy myself up a bit."

Tod backed out of the barn, doubled up. Nearly choking at the "beautiful" boots.

"But why do you think they are stolen, Mack?" said the Squire.

"I left 'em safe here o' Saturday evening, sir, when I locked up the barn. The things be all gone now; you may see as they be, Squire. There bain't a vestige of 'em—and what will become of me? A'most a new smock-frock, and the beautifullest pair o' strong boots as 'ud ha' lasted me for years."

Tod shrieked out at last, unable to help himself. Mack cast a reproachful glance at him, as if he thought the merriment too cruel.

"You must have been drinking on Saturday, Ben Mack, and fancied you left 'em here," put in Molly, tartly.

"Me been a-drinking!" retorted poor bereaved Mack, ready to cry

at the aspersion. "Why, I'd never had a drop o' nothing inside my lips since dinner time, save a draught of skim milk as the dairy-maid give me. They was in that far corner, they was, them boots; and the smock-frock was laid smooth across the shaft of the cart here, with the cotton neck-handkecher folded a-top on't."

"Well, well, we must inquire after the things," remarked the Squire, turning to go back to breakfast. "I don't believe they are stolen, Mack: they'll be found somewhere. If you had lost yourself, you could not have made more noise over it. I'm sure I thought the ricks must be on fire."

Tod could hardly eat his breakfast for laughing. Every now and then he came out with the most unexpected burst. The Pater demanded what there was to laugh at in Mack's having mislaid his clothes.

But as the morning went on, the Squire changed his tone. When no trace could be discovered of the articles, high or low, he took up the opinion that we had been visited by tramps, and sent off for old Jones the constable. Jones sent back his duty, and he would come across as soon as he could, but he was busy organising the search after Master Westerbrook, and posting up the fresh bills.

"Johnny, we must dispose of that hair of Fred's in some way," Tod whispered to me in the course of the morning. "To let anybody drop upon it would never do. Come along."

We went up, four stairs at a time, bolted ourselves in his room, and undid the hair. Fine, silky hair, not quite auburn, not quite light chestnut, but as nice a colour as you would wish to see.

"Better burn it," suggested Tod.

"Won't it make an awful smell?"

"Who cares? You can go away if you don't like the smell."

Tod turned the hair into his wash-hand basin, and set it alight: the grate was filled up with the summer shavings. A frizzling and fizzing set in at once: and very soon a rare smell of singeing.

"Open the window, Johnny."

I had hardly done it, when the handle of the door was turned, and the panel thumped at. Hannah's voice came through the keyhole.

"Mr. Joseph!—Master Johnny! What's the matter?"

"What should be the matter?" called back Tod, putting his hand over my mouth that I should not speak. "Go back to your nursery."

"There's something burning! My goodness! it's just as if all the blankets in the house were singeing! You've been setting your blankets on fire, Mr. Joseph!"

"And if I have!" cried Tod, blowing away at the hair to make it burn the quicker. "They are not yours."

"Good heavens! you'll burn us all up, sir! Fire—fire!" shrieked out Hannah, frightened beyond her wits. "For goodness' sake, Miss

Lena, keep away from the key-hole! Here, ma'am! Ma'am! Here's Mr. Joseph with all his blankets afire!"

Mrs. Todhetley ran up, and her terrified appeal sounded through the door. Tod threw it open. The hair had burnt itself out.

"Why don't you go off for the parish engine?" demanded Tod of Hannah, as they came sniffing in. "Well, where's the fire?"

"But, my dears, something must be singeing," said Mrs. Todhetley. "Where is it?—what is it?"

"It can't be anything but the blankets," cried Hannah, choking and stifling. "Miss Lena, then, don't I tell you to keep outside, out of harm's way? Well, it is strong!"

Mrs. Todhetley put her hand on my arm. "Johnny, what is it? Where is the danger?"

"There's no danger at all," struck in Tod. "I suppose I can burn some old fishing-tackle rubbish in my basin if I please; horsehair, and that. You should not have the grates filled with paper, madam, if you don't like the smell."

"You might have taken it to the kitchen and burnt it there, Joseph," she said, mildly. "Indeed I was very much alarmed."

"Thanks to Hannah," said Tod. "You'd have known nothing about it but for her. I wish you'd just order her to mind her own business."

"It was my business, Mr. Joseph—smelling all that frightful smell o' singeing! And if —— Why, whose boots be these?" broke off Hannah.

Opening the closet to get out the hair, we had left Fred's boots exposed. Hannah's eyes, ranging themselves around in search of the singeing, had espied them. She answered her own question.

"You must have brought them from school in your box by mistake, Mr. Joseph. These are men's boots, these are!"

"I can take them back to school again," said Tod, carelessly.

So that passed off. "And it is the best thing we can do with the boots, Johnny, as I think," he said to me in a low tone when we were once more left to ourselves. "We can't burn them. They'd make a choicer scent than the hair made."

"I suppose they'd not fit Mack."

Tod laughed. "If he kept those other 'beautiful boots' for high days and holidays, what would he not keep these for? No, Johnny; they are too slender for Mack's foot."

"I wonder how poor Fred likes his clumsy ones?—How he contrives to tramp it in them?"

"I would give something to know that he was clear out of the country!"

We were to dine in the middle of the day, and start for school at half-past two. Tod boldly asked the Squire to give him a sovereign,

apart from any replenishing of his pockets that might take place at starting. He wanted it for a particular purpose, he said.

And the Pater, after holding forth a bit about thrift versus extravagance, handed out the sovereign. Tod betook himself to the barn. There sat Mack on the inverted wheelbarrow, at his dinner of cold bacon and bread, and looking most disconsolate.

"Found the things, Mack?"

"Me found 'em, Mr. Joseph! No, sir; and I bain't ever likely to find 'em, that's more. They are clean walked off, they are. When I thinks o' them there beautiful boots, and that there best smock-frock, I be fit to choke, I be!"

Tod was fit to choke, keeping his countenance. "What was their value, Mack?"

"They were of untold val'e, sir, to me. I'd not hardly ha' lost 'em for a one-pound note."

"Would a pound replace 'em?"

Mack, drawing his knife across the bread and bacon, let it stay in the middle, and looked up. Tod spoke more plainly.

"Could you buy new ones with a pound?"

"Bless your heart, sir, and where be I to get a pound from? In course I could. I was just a-calkelating how long it 'ud take me to save enough money up——"

"Don't bother. Look here: there's a pound"—tossing the sovereign to him. "Buy your things, and think no more of the old ones."

Mack could not believe his eyes or ears. "Oh, Mr. Joseph! Well, I never! Sir, you be ——"

"But now, understand this much, Mack. I only give you the money on one condition—that you say nothing about it. *Tell nobody.*"

"Well, I never, Mr. Joseph! A whole golden pound! Why, sir, it'll set me up reg'lar in ——"

"If you don't attend to what I am saying, Mack, I'll take it away again. You are not to tell anyone that you have had it, do you hear?"

"Sir, I'll never tell a blessed soul. And I'm sure I ——"

Tod walked away, cutting the thanks short.

As we were turning out at the gates on our way back to school, Tod driving Bob and Blister (which he much liked to do, though it was not always the Squire trusted him) and Giles sitting behind us, Duffham was coming along on his horse. Tod pulled up, and asked what was the latest news of Gisby.

"Well, strange to say, we are beginning to have some faint hopes of him," replied the doctor. "At mid-day he was a trifle better."

"That's good news," said Tod. "The man is a detestable sneak, but of course one does not want him to die. Save him if you can, Mr. Duffham—for Fred Westerbrook's sake. Good-bye."

"Good speed to you both," returned Duffham. "Take care of those horses. They are fresh."

Tod gently touched the two with the whip, and called back a saucy word. He particularly resented any reflection on his driving.

A year went by. We were at home for the Michaelmas holidays again. And, who should chance to call at the manor the very day of our arrival, but old Westerbrook.

Changes had taken place at the N. D. Farm. Have you ever observed that when our whole heart is set upon a thing, our entire aims and actions are directed to bring it about, it is all quietly frustrated by that Finger of Fate that none of us, whether prince or peasant, can resist? Mrs. Westerbrook had been doing her best to move heaven and earth to encompass the deposition of Fred Westerbrook for her own succession, and behold she could not. Just as she had contrived that Fred should be crushed, and she herself put into old Westerbrook's will in his place, as the inheritor of the N. D. Farm and all its belongings, Heaven rendered her work nugatory by taking her to itself.

Yes, Mrs. Westerbrook was dead. She was carried off after a rather short illness: and Mr. Westerbrook was a widower, bereaved and solitary.

He was better off without her. The home was ten times more peaceful. He felt *that:* but he felt it to be very lonely; and he more than once caught himself wishing Fred was back again. Which of course meant that he had never gone away, and never turned out tobe a scamp.

Gisby did not die. Gisby had recovered in process of time, and was now more active on the farm than ever. Rather too active, its master was beginning dimly to suspect. Gisby seemed to haunt him. Gisby assumed more power than was at all needful; and Gisby never ceased to pour into Mr. Westerbrook's ear reiterations of Fred's base iniquity. Altogether, Mr. Westerbrook was growing a bit tired of Gisby. He had taken to put him down with sharp curtness; and once, when Gisby ventured to hint that it might be a convenient arrangement if he took up his abode in the house, Mr. Westerbrook swore at him. As to Fred, he was still popularly looked upon as cousin-german to the fiend incarnate.

Nothing had been heard of him. Nothing of any kind since that moonlight night when he had made his escape. Tod and I, waiting for news from him so long, and waiting in vain, had at last made up our minds that nothing more ever would be heard of him in this world. In short, that he had slipped out of it. Perhaps been starved out of it. Starved to death.

Well, Mr. Westerbrook called at the Manor within an hour of our getting home for Michaelmas, just twelve months after the uproar.

To me, he looked to be a good deal changed: his manner was quiet and subdued, almost as though he no longer took much interest in life;

his hair had turned much greyer, and he complained of a continual pain in the left leg, which made him stiff and sometimes prevented him from walking. Duffham called it a touch of rheumatism: but Mr. Westerbrook fancied it might be something worse. The Squire began talking of the oats on the N. D. Farm, saying what a famous crop it was.

"Good crops no longer bring me the satisfaction they did, Squire," was the indifferent reply. "I've nobody to save for now.—Will you spend a day with me before you go back, young gentlemen?" he went on, turning to us. "Come on Friday. It is pretty lonely there. It wants company to enliven it."

And we promised we would.

I went with him, to help him over the stile into the lane, on account of his stiffness—for that was the road he meant to take to Church Dykely. In passing the ricks he laid his left hand on my shoulder.

"You won't mind a lonely day with a lonely old man?"

"We shall like it, sir. We will do our best to enliven you."

"It is not much that will do that now, Johnny Ludlow," said he. "When a man gets to my age, and feels his health and strength failing, it seems hard to be left all alone."

"No doubt, sir. I wish you had Fred back!" I boldly added.

"Hush, Johnny. Fred is lost to me for good. He made his own bed, you know, and is lying on it. As I have to lie on mine—such as it is. Such as he left to me!"

"Do you know where Fred is, sir?"

"Do I know where Fred is!" he repeated, in a tart tone. "How should I be likely to know? How *could* I know? I have never heard tidings of him, good or bad, since that wretched night."

We had gained the stile. Old Westerbrook rested his arms upon the top bar instead of getting over, tapping the step on the other side with his thick walking-stick.

"Gisby's opinion is that Fred threw himself into the first deep pond that lay in his way that night; and so put an end to his career for good," said he. "My late wife thought so too."

"Don't you believe anything of the kind, sir," said I, in hot impulse. "I am quite sure he did not."

"When a man gets the crime of murder on his soul, there's no answering for what he may be tempted to do in his remorse and terror."

"It was not murder at all, sir. Gisby is well again."

"But it was thought to be murder at the time. Who would have given a brass button for Gisby's life that night? Don't quibble, Master Johnny." I wished I dared tell him all!

"Shall I walk with you as far as the houses, sir?"

"No, thank ye, lad. I want to be independent as long as I can. Come you both over in good time on Friday. Perhaps we can get an hour or two's shooting."

Friday came, and we had rather a jolly day than not, what with shooting and feasting. Gisby drew near to join us in the cover, but his master civilly told him that he was not wanted and need not hinder his time to look after us. Never a word did old Westerbrook say that day of Fred, and he put on his best spirits to entertain us.

But in going away at night, when Tod had gone round to get the bag of birds, which old Westerbrook insisted on our taking, he suddenly spoke to me. We were standing at his front-door under the starlight.

"What made you imply the other day that Fred was not guilty?"

"Because, sir, I feel sure he was not. I am as sure of it as though Heaven had shown it to me."

"He was with the gang of poachers. Gisby saw him shoot," said the old man, with refuting emphasis.

"Gisby may have been mistaken. And Fred's having been with the poachers at the moment, was, I think, accidental."

"Then why, if not guilty, did he go away?"

"Fear sent him. What would his word have been against Gisby's dying declaration? You remember what a hubbub there was, sir—enough to frighten any man away, however innocent he might be."

"Allowing, for argument's sake, that your theory is correct, and that he was frightened into going into hiding, why does he not come out of it? Gisby is alive, and well again."

"I think Fred must be dead, sir," I said, "and that's the truth. If he were not, some of us would surely have heard of him."

"I see," said the old gentleman, looking straight up at the stars. "We are both of the same mind, Johnny—that he is dead. I say he might have died that night, you think he went away first and died afterwards. Not much difference between us, is there?"

I thought there was a great deal; but I could not tell him why.

On our way home, Tod with the bag of game slung over his shoulder, we came upon Mr. Holland near the parsonage, with Edna Blake and the children. They had been to Farmer Page's harvest-home. While the parson talked to Tod, Edna snatched a moment with me.

"Have you heard any news, Johnny?"

"Of *him?* Never. We can't make it out."

"Perhaps we never shall hear," she sighed. "Even if he reached the coast in safety, he may not have got over to the other side. A great many wrecks took place about that time: our weekly paper was full of them. It was the time of the equinoctial gales, and ——"

"Come along, Johnny!" called out Tod at this juncture. "We must get on. Good-night, Edna: good-night, you youngsters."

The next day, Saturday, we went to Worcester, the Squire driving us, and there saw Gisby as large as life. The man had naturally great assumption of manner, and latterly he had taken to dress in the fashion.

He was looming up High Street, booted and spurred, his silver-headed whip in his hand. Taking off his hat with an air, he wished the Squire a loud good-morning, as if the town belonged to him, and we were but subjects in it.

"I should think Westerbrook has never been fool enough to make his will in Gisby's favour!" remarked the Squire, staring after him. "Egad, though, it looks like it!"

"It is to be hoped, sir, that he would make it in Fred's," was Tod's rejoinder. And the suggestion put the Pater out.

"Make it in Fred's," he retorted, going into one of his heats, and turning sharply round on the crowded pavement near the market-house, by which he came into contact with two women and their big butter-baskets. "What do you mean by that, sir? Fred Westerbrook is beyond the pale of wills, and all else. It's not respectable to name his name. He —— bless the women! What on earth are these baskets at?"

They seemed to be playing at bumps with the Squire; baskets thick and threefold. Tod went in to the rescue, and got him out.

It was a strange thing. It really was. Considering that for the past day or two something or other had arisen to bring up thoughts of Fred Westerbrook, it was strange that the strangest of all things in connection with him was yet to come.

Sitting round the fire after supper, upon getting home from Worcester —it is a long drive, you know—and Tod had gone up to bed, dead tired, who should walk in but Duffham. He would not sit down, had no time; but told his business hastily. Dick Standish was dying, and had something on his conscience.

"I would have heard his confession," said Duffham, "as I have heard that of many another dying man; but he seems to wish to make it to a magistrate. Either to a magistrate, or to old Mr. Westerbrook, he urged. But there's no time to go up there, so I came for you, Squire."

"Bless me!" cried the Squire, starting up in a commotion—for he thought a great deal of his magisterial duties, and this was a very unusual call. "Dick Standish dying! What can he have to say? He has been nothing but a poacher all his life, poor fellow! And what has Westerbrook to do with him?"

"Well," said Duffham, in his equable way, "it strikes me that what he wants to say may affect Fred. Perhaps Standish can clear him."

"Clear Fred Westerbrook!—clear an iniquitous young man who could turn poacher and murderer! What next will you say, Duffham? Here, Johnny, get me my hat and coat. Dear me! Take down a confession! I wonder whether there'll be any ink there?"

"Let me go with you, sir!" I said, eagerly. "I will take my little pocket inkstand—and some paper—and—and everything likely to be wanted. Please let me go!"

"Well, yes, you can, Johnny. Don't forget a Bible. Ten to one if *he* has one."

There were three brothers of these Standishes, Tom, Jim, and Dick, none of them particularly well-doing. Tom was no better than a kind of tramp, reappearing in the village only by fits and starts; Jim, who had married Mary Picker, was likewise given to roving abroad, until found and brought back by the parish; Dick, as the Squire phrased it, was nothing but a poacher, and made his home mostly with Jim and Mary. The cottage was at our end of the parish; half a mile away; and we put our best feet foremost.

Dick lay upon the low bed in the loft. His illness had been very short and sharp; it was scarcely a week yet since he was taken with it. Duffham had done his best; but the man was dying. Jim Standish was off on one of his roving expeditions, neither the parish nor the public knowing whither.

The Squire sat by the bed, taking down the man's confession at a small table, by the light of a small candle. I and Duffham stood to hear it; Mary Standish was sent down to the kitchen. What he said cleared Fred Westerbrook—Duffham had no doubt gathered so much before he came for the Squire. Just what Fred had told us of the events of the night, Dick Standish confirmed now. The Squire took all down; and Dick signed it.

I was screwing the little inkstand up to return it to my pocket, when Mr. Holland entered, Mary Standish having sent for him. Leaving him with the sick man, we came away.

"Johnny, do you know, we might almost have made sure Fred Westerbrook was not guilty," said the Squire, quite humbly, as we were crossing the turnip-field. "But why on earth did he run away? Where is he?"

"I think he must be dead, sir. What news this will be for Mr. Westerbrook!"

"Dear me, yes! I shall go to him with it in the morning."

When the morning came—which was Sunday—he was so impatient to be off that he could hardly finish his breakfast. The master of the N. D. Farm, who no longer had energy or health to keep the old early hours, was only sitting down to his meal when the Squire got there. In his well-meaning but hot way, he plunged into the narrative so cleverly that old Westerbrook nearly had a fit.

"Not guilty!" he stammered, when he came to himself. "Fred not guilty! Only met the poachers by accident!—was not the one that shot Gisby? Why, that's what Johnny Ludlow was trying to make me believe only a day or two ago!"

"Johnny did? Oh, he often sees through a stone wall. It's true, anyway, Westerbrook. Fred never had a gun in his hand that night."

"Then—knowing himself innocent, why on earth does he stay away?"

"Johnny thinks he must be dead."

Old Westerbrook gave a groan of assent; and his trembling hands upset a saucerful of coffee on the table-cloth.

They came on to church together arm-in-arm. Mr. Holland joined them, and told the news—Dick Standish was dead: had died penitent. Penitent, so far as might be, in the very short time he had given to repentance, added the clergyman.

But, the knowing that Fred was innocent seemed to have renewed his uncle's lease of life. He was altogether a different man. The congregation felt quite electrified by some words read out by Mr. Holland before the General Thanksgiving: "Thomas Westerbrook desires to return thanks to Almighty God for a great mercy vouchsafed to him." Whispering to one another in their pews under cover of the drooped heads, they asked what it meant, and whether Fred could have come home. The report of Dick Standish's confession had been heard before church: and Gisby and Shepherd got some hard words for having so positively laid the deed on Fred.

"I declare to goodness I thought it was Mr. Fred that fired!" said Shepherd, earnestly. "Moonlight's deceptive, in course: but I know he was close again' the gun."

Yes, he was close against the gun: Dick Standish had said that much. Mr. Fred was standing next him when he fired; Mr. Fred had tried to put out his arm to stop him, but wasn't quick enough, and called him a villain for doing it.

The Squire made old Westerbrook walk back to dine with us. Sitting over a plate of new walnuts afterwards—there was not much time for dessert on Sundays, before the afternoon service—Tod and I told all about Fred's hiding in the church and how he had got away. But we did not say anything of the money given him by Edna Blake: she might not have liked it. The Squire stared with surprise, and seemed uncertain whether to praise us, or to blow us sharply up.

"Shut up in the church for three days and nights!—Nothing to eat, save what you could crib for him!——Got away at last in Mack's smock-frock and boots! Well, you two are a pair of pretty conjurers!"

"God bless 'em both for it!" cried old Westerbrook.

"But they ought to have told *me*, you know, Westerbrook. I could have managed so much better—helped him off more effectually."

Tod gave me a kick under the table. He was nearly splitting, at hearing the Squire say this.

The first thing Mr. Westerbrook did was to insert advertisements in the *Times* and other newspapers, about a hundred of them, begging and imploring of his dear nephew (sometimes he worded it his "dear boy") to return to him. Always underneath this advertisement, wherever it appeared, was inserted another: stating that the particulars of the poaching affray, which took place on a certain date,

(mentioning it), were known; that the poacher, Richard Standish, who shot Walter Gisby had confessed the crime, and that Gisby had not died of his wounds but recovered from them. This was done with the view of letting Fred know that he might come back with safety. But he never came. The advertisements brought forth no answer of any kind.

The master of the N. D. Farm became very short with his bailiff as time went on. There was no reason to suppose that Gisby had intentionally accused Fred of the shot: he had really supposed it to come from Fred; but nevertheless Mr. Westerbrook took a great dislike to him, and was very short and crusty. Gisby did not relish that, and they had rows perpetually. When we got home for the Christmas holidays, it was thought that Gisby would not be long on the N. D. Farm.

"Johnny, I want to tell you! I have had a letter. From *him*."

The whisper came from Edna Blake. It was Christmas Eve: and we were in the church, a lot of us, sticking the branches of holly in the pews. The leaves had never seemed so green or the berries so red.

"Not from Fred?"

"Yes, I have. It came addressed to me about a week ago, with a ten-pound Bank-of-England note enclosed. There was only a line or two, just saying he had not been able to return it before, but that he hoped he was at length getting on: and that if he did get on, he should be sure to write again later. It was signed F. W. That was all. Neither his name was mentioned nor mine, nor any address."

"Where did it come from?"

"London, I think."

"From London! Nonsense, Edna!"

"The post-mark was London. You are welcome to see the letter. I have brought it with me."

Drawing the letter from her pocket under cover of her mantle, I took it off to the porch. True enough: the letter had undoubtedly been posted in London. Calling Tod, we talked a little, and then told Edna that we both thought she ought to disclose this to Mr. Westerbrook.

"I think so too," she said, "but I should not like to tell him myself ——though his manner to me lately has been very kind. Will you tell him, Johnny? I will lend you the letter to show him. He will be sure to want to see it."

"And he will have to know about the gold, Edna. The loan of that night."

"Yes; it cannot be helped. I have thought it all over, and I see that there's no help for its being known now. The letter alludes to it, you perceive."

After that, the advertisements were resumed. Mr. Westerbrook put some solicitor in London to work, and they were inserted in every known

paper. Also in some of the American and Australian papers. Enquiries were made after Fred in London. But nothing came of it.

The months went on. Neither Fred nor news of him turned up. That he was vegetating somewhere beyond the pale of civilization, or else was at length really dead, appeared to be conclusive.

July. At home again for the holidays. And the first news we heard was, that Mr. Westerbrook and his bailiff had parted company. Gisby had said farewell to the N. D. Farm.

In the satisfaction of finding himself sole master, which he had not been for many a year, and to celebrate Gisby's departure, Mr. Westerbrook gave a syllabub feast, inviting to it old and young, grown people and children. Syllabub feasts were tolerably common with us.

It was an intensely hot day; the lawn was dotted with the guests; most of them had gathered in groups under the trees in the shade. Old Westerbrook, the Squire and Mrs. Todhetley, Parson and Mrs. Holland, and Mr. Brandon were together under the great horse chesnut-tree. Edna Blake had (of course) the trouble of the parson's children, and I was talking to her. Little tables, with bowls of syllabubs on them, and cakes and fruit, stood about: by-and-by, at sunset or so, we were to go in to a high tea.

It was getting on for two years since the night of Fred Westerbrook's departure; and Edna was looking five times two years older. Worn and patient were the lines of her face. She was dressed rather poorly, as usual. She had never dressed much otherwise: but since that unlucky night her clothes had been made to last as I should think nobody else's clothes ever lasted. To-day she wore a muslin that once had rose-red spots on it, but the repeated washings had diluted them to a pale pink; and the pink ribbons on her hat had faded too.

"Have you the headache, Edna?"

"A little," she answered, holding her hand to her head. "Charley and Tom would run about as we came along, and I had to run after them. To be much under a blazing sun often gives me the headache now."

I wondered to myself why the parson and his wife could not have ordered Charley and Tom to be still. Fathers and mothers never think their children can tire people.

"I want some more syllabub, Edna," cried Charley just then.

"And me too," put in little Miles Stirling.

She got up patiently; laded some of the stuff into two of the custard cups, and gave one each to the children; folding her handkerchief under little Stirling's chin, to guard his velvet dress. They stood at the table, two eager little cormorants, taking it in with their tea-spoons.

At that moment, the gate behind us opened, and a gentleman came in. We turned round to see who was arriving so late. A stranger.

Some good-looking fellow with auburn hair, a beard that glimmered like soft silk in the sun, and a bronzed face. To judge by his movements, he was taken by surprise at sight of the gay company: and stood in evident hesitation, looking about him.

"Oh, Johnny!"

The low, half-terrified exclamation came from Edna. Her eyes were strained on the stranger; her face had turned white as death. He saw us and came towards us. We were the nearest to him.

"Do you know me, Edna?"

I knew him then: knew his voice. Ay, and himself also, now that I saw him distinctly. Edna did not faint; though she was white enough for it: she only put her hands together as one does in prayer, a joyous thankfulness dawning in her eyes.

"Frederick?"

"Yes, my darling. How strange that you should be the first to greet me! And *you*, Johnny, old fellow! You *have* grown."

His two hands lay for a time in mine and Edna's. Nobody had observed him yet: we were at the end of the lawn, well under the trees.

"More syllabub, Edna!" shrieked out that greedy young Charley. "And me want more too," added little Miles, "me not had enough."

Edna drew her hand away to go to the table, a happy light shining through her tears. Fred put his arm within mine; and we went across the grass together.

The first to see him was Mr. Brandon. He took in the situation at once, and in a degree prepared Mr. Westerbrook. "Here's some bronzed young man coming up, Westerbrook," said he. "Looks like a traveller. I should not be surprised if it is your nephew: or perhaps one who brings news of him."

Old Westerbrook fell back in his chair, as Fred stood there with his two hands stretched out to him. Then he sprang up, burst into tears, and clasped Fred in his arms. Of all commotions!—Mr. Brandon put his yellow silk handkerchief on his head, and walked away out of it into the sun. The Squire stared as if he had never seen a bronzed man before; Tod came leaping up, and the best part of the company after him.

"Edna, Edna!" called out Mr. Westerbrook, sitting back in his chair again, and holding Fred tightly. "Edna, I want you instantly."

She advanced modestly, blushing lilies and roses, her hat held in her hand by its faded strings. Mr. Westerbrook looked at her through his tears.

"Here he is, my dear— do you see?—come back to us at last. We must both welcome him. The homestead is yours from this day, Fred; I will have but just a corner in it. I am too old now for a busy life: you must be the acting master. And Edna, my child, you will come here to be his helpmeet in it, and to take care of me in my declining years—my dear little daughter. Thank God for all things!"

Fred gave us just a brief summary of the past. Getting over to America without much difficulty, he had sought there for some remunerative work, and sought in vain. One of those panics that the Americans go in for had recently occurred in the States, and numbers of men were unable to get employment. After sundry adventures and some semi-starvation, he at length made his way to the West Indies. A relative of his late mother was, he knew, settled somewhere within the regions of British Guiana. He found him in Berbice, a small merchant of New Amsterdam. To him Fred told his whole story; and the old cousin gave him a berth in his counting-house. Office work was new to Fred; but he did his best; and with the first proceeds of his pay, he enclosed the ten pounds to Edna; the house forwarding the letter to their agents in London, to be posted from thence. Some months later, he chanced to see the advertisement for him in an English newspaper. As soon as he could, he came off to answer it in person; and—here he was.

"All's well that ends well," remarked Mr. Brandon, in his dry way.

"And don't you go fraternising with poachers again, Mr. Fred!" cried out the Squire. "See what it brought you to the last time."

"No, Squire; never again," answered Fred, pushing back his auburn hair (very long again), with a smile. "This one time has been quite enough."

"But you cannot have Edna, you know," said Mrs. Holland to him, with a disturbed face. "The parsonage could not get on without her."

"I am afraid it will have to try, Mrs. Holland."

"I shall be obliged to keep my bed; that will be the end of it," said Mrs. Holland, gloomily. "Nobody *can* manage the children but Edna. When she is otherwise occupied, their noise is frightful: ten times more distracting than the worst toothache."

Fred said nothing further, she was looking so ruefully woebegone. Putting his arm into mine, he turned into a shady walk.

"Will you be my groomsman at the wedding, Johnny? But for you, my good friend, I don't know that I should have been saved to see this day."

"Nay, Fred, I think it was the key of the church that saved you. I will be your groomsman if you really and truly prefer to pitch upon me, rather than on somebody older and better."

"Yes, you are right," he answered, lifting his hat, and glancing upwards. "It was the key of the church—under God."

JOHNNY LUDLOW.

THE PENALTY OF GENIUS.

WHEN Solomon asked for wisdom, it proved that Solomon was already wise; but when clever people wish they had genius, as so many do, we much doubt their good sense; for we believe that genius, so great a blessing to the world in general, is too often a pain and a misery to those who possess it.

The love of notoriety is innate in the human heart; and in some this passion is so great, that they would rather be known for bad deeds than not known at all. Of such was the man who fired the ancient city, that his name might be handed down to posterity.

Once more, the question that has been asked so often let us ask—What is genius?—so frequently defined, yet undefinable. It is an immeasurable height, an unfathomable depth. We cannot compass or confine it within rules and regulations: it respects not persons, but delights to astonish the world by appearing in all sorts of odd people, in all kinds of queer places. A creature endowed with it is like us in one thing only—he sins. In that lies our sole claim to be considered of the same species with him: it is the one thing which makes him a little lower than the angels.

Buffon says, Patience is genius. Undoubtedly; for most men of genius represent the triumph of patience and perseverance over every other obstacle. But it is patience restricted to one object—the pursuit of one particular talent. A man of genius will wait for years, with the utmost patience, for the recognition of his ability; but during that time he will manifest the greatest impatience for the trifling cares of life: so that patience, as generally understood, is not genius, but only an attribute thereof. Carlyle says, Genius is the power of taking infinite pains. We think this definition contains as much truth as the one before quoted, and applies to the same extent. Sheridan wrote and re-wrote the "School for Scandal" more times than the world will ever know, or even guess—which was taking infinite pains; yet the ordinary pains which ordinary people take to keep sober and out of debt were almost unknown to him. How comes it that so often in those very things in which fools are wise, wise men are fools? So many have tried to describe genius in an epigram, that we hope we may be allowed to add ours, though we fear we fail, like others, to express what is required.

We say, then, that genius is the ambition and the ability to do great things. We think our definition includes both sides of the question—the sad and the happy. It must be happiness to have the ability to do

great things, and it is this power which we every-day people envy and covet; but in so doing, we too often overlook the companion of ability, which is ambition, and a chief cause of the suffering attaching to genius.

Ambition, in its very mildest form, is pain; for it is the yearning of the heart for what it has not; and in genius this pain must be greatest, because there the ambition is for the highest result. A great ambition, continued ungratified for many years, is a restless, tormenting evil which gnaws the heart. Philosophy may calm the fiend for a time, but he *will* break out afresh, robbing the sufferer of all pleasure in life. The victim does not know what it is to be young, his heart becomes prematurely grey, and his life is one prolonged agony, which he too often seeks to forget in sin. Such is the early life of the man of genius; but, being the rule, there are exceptions. Of our own day, Lytton and Dickens escaped this purgatory. They never felt "the sickening ambition recoiling on itself"; but Thackeray felt it long and keenly. Thackeray, in his original state, was a very tender-hearted man. Indeed, it is impossible for a man to be a great satirist unless he has a great heart. But Thackeray was somewhat hardened by his mental sufferings. He came to regard life sadly, often fiercely. He had a sad and angry contempt for those who so long rejected him; and these feelings gave a depth and keenness to his satire which Lytton and Dickens could never imitate. Dickens was too successful to be sarcastic: he was so pleased with the world for being so pleased with him that he could not even *think* of anything really "cutting" to say about it. He could only caricature us. But we do not say that Dickens was a happy man. No one who has read his written life can think that.

In one or two instances the penalty of genius has proved too heavy for the bearer, as in the case of Chatterton. Grand John Milton, like Chatterton, died unknown, and in comparative poverty. The world was blind to the merits of the blind bard: the secret of the poet's genius was only known to Him who gave it, and to him who received it. Milton could never have been a happy man: he must have felt his obscurity acutely; but he cultivated resignation till it reached in him its most perfect state.* Providence is all-wise, and seldom gives to men a greater weight than they can carry.

Robert Burns is a remarkable instance of the curse of genius. Burns could read and wrte, and had a sound head and constitution. With these and nothing added, Burns would have been a happy man, and have thrived. But, unfortunately for himself, he was a man of genius. Here was a mind, cast in that delicate mould which nature reserves for poets, surrounded by poverty, and a coarse, though warm-hearted, peasantry.

What must have been his feelings when he discovered that he was a

* We are speaking of Milton as a poet.

man of genius? for, being one, he knew it most assuredly. A bright flash of happiness, with romantic dreams of fame and fortune, followed by the stern reality of years of toil and obscurity. During these long, fearful years, Burns knew that he was great: he felt that he was the cleverest ploughboy in the world; yet he must go on ploughing, and see others do badly what he could do well. While such thoughts soothe, they madden, and at once bring consolation and sorrow to the troubled heart of genius. It is the torture of Tantalus applied to the intellect. What wonder, then, if Burns fell down and worshipped John Barleycorn? After many years, Burns took his place at table with lords and ladies; where, instead of behaving like a ploughboy, he showed the manners of a modest, though self-possessed, gentleman. Here he proved his genius, by rising equal to the occasion. People tried to impress him with their grandeur, but the inspired ploughboy firmly, but respectfully, declined to be astonished. He knew that he was superior to his superiors, and that the guest was at once far above and far beneath the host. Still he was not happy. He had wearied for grand society, but now that he had it, he found it vanity. People were disappointed in Burns, because Burns was disappointed in them. He felt himself alone in the world: he was a solitary man in a great crowd: he had lived over thirty years and had literally never seen a fellow-creature—and he never did see one.

Every man of genius feels this dreadful sense of loneliness more or less. It caused Byron much misery: John Stuart Mill suffered from it for years; and Dickens, when near the end, complains that he feels that he has missed a some one he has never seen. The ideal of such men is seldom realized. Unknown to themselves, they create a creature in their heart and brain whom they eagerly seek in flesh and blood, and too often in vain. It does not follow—indeed, it seldom happens—that this ideal conception of the man of genius is a perfect creature, or one like unto himself, but generally of a contrary nature, and possessing the very qualities which are most wanting in him. Some few have found this ideal, and always in the form of woman: others have found her only to lose her, like Walter Scott and Byron; not a few have found her in the wife of another man, like Petrarch and Sterne; others have fondly imagined that they have found her, but, too late, have discovered their mistake. These last are they whose married lives have proved failures. The wives of men of genius separated from their husbands are a long and fearful list. Who is to blame? Certainly not the wives, for they are human, and very feminine; and as for their husbands, they are more than human: so let not us men sit in judgment upon them.

Byron had all the restlessness and contempt for the world peculiar to Burns. Their natures were much alike. The peer and the peasant unite in the common temperament of the poet. Byron was very near

being the most unfortunate man who ever lived. He endured the misery of deformity, of disappointed love, of calumny, and of genius. He only wanted Burns's poverty to make him the most unhappy man ever born. Any one of these misfortunes would be as much as an ordinary being could well bear; but when we think of them centred in one man, and of the painful sensitiveness of genius to such influences, we wonder that Byron was so good a man as he was.

With men of genius, sensitiveness is a perfect disease; indeed, it is this very quality which enables them to feel, and to express, those emotions which escape other men. Sensitiveness is an innocent and amiable self-love, and must not be confounded with selfishness. A selfish man is sensitive, but only for himself; but a sensitive man has much sympathy for others. The two qualities always go together, and are largely developed in women and men of genius. Many women have as much sympathy as men of genius, but they exercise it with greater strictness and partiality. Thus, women have little or no sympathy for evildoers, but men of genius frequently have.

Speaking of calumny, it is a thing to which a man of genius is particularly liable, especially an unknown man. People see that he is often unhappy, and uncertain and strange in his humour and ways—in short, he is different from themselves; and not knowing the cause, they are so kind as to invent one, always taking great care that it shall be to the man's discredit. Said Lytton, with tears in his eyes, "Men calumniate me, yet I would die to serve them." The fact is, we dearly love to see each other come down heavily. It is innate in us. It is the secret of dramatic success. So long as the characters in a play are getting into trouble, we are interested; but if an inexperienced writer devotes too much of the last act to getting his people out of their difficulties, the audience lose interest, begin to yawn, and, finally, go into the lobbies and talk scandal.

The late Emanuel Deutsch was another sad instance of the curse of genius.

Deutsch was employed in the British Museum, and pursued his literary work in the evenings of days of hard labour. But his brain and his body struck against working overtime, and his genius had to give in to them. He struggled bravely on, working for his living whilst he was dying. He seldom complained, and then only to himself, or to his very intimate friends, of whom he had but few. They are sham geniuses who complain of neglect. The real men know that such a course only brings ridicule upon them, and they dread to be known as unknown. But for his genius, other things being equal, Deutsch would have been a contented member of society, and have lived many more years. As he was, we cannot tell the mental pain he suffered. Language cannot do his feelings justice. Deutsch wrote two or three articles. He was permitted a distant sight of the promised land—then

death. His was the curse of genius in its worst form—he was denied the bare opportunity of putting on paper the thoughts with which his brain was filled. However, it is finished; so let us sit down once more, and try and forget, or refuse to believe, that, at this present moment, there are a few men in every branch of literature and art, living as Deutsch lived, perhaps dying as he died, and that there always will be such men to the end of time.

We will now make a few remarks upon a class who are largely responsible for the sufferings endured by men of genius. We mean the critics. There are critics and critics. First, there are the men who, fitted by nature and study, conscientiously form, and honestly state, their opinions. To these all honour. But behind these few are a great number who have not the brains to perceive, or the justice to acknowledge, true merit. These latter—these failures in literature and art—condemn in short sentences, and never scruple to sacrifice their author to an epigram. They condemn good work, and, for a time, blast a reputation. The mission of criticism is grand and noble in itself. To get up one morning and declare an unknown man famous, should fill the critic's heart with the joy of a colonist who finds a diamond in a wilderness of rubbish. But these critics who go prospecting for the jewel called genius cannot recognise it, when, after turning over much rubbish for many days, it comes to their hand. Thus is their labour vain, and the jewel lost. The fate of every man of genius is in the hands of the critics. It is unfortunate that it should be so, but people will not read a man's works till they have read of them. Every man of genius owes his first success to the sagacity of some influential and discerning critic; for a man of genius is like a mighty engine, which, although it possess the power of five hundred horses, is unable to start until some weak man gives the fly-wheel a push.

Critics seldom think of the sufferings of men of genius waiting to be called to the front. As we have pointed out, the early life of genius is often a perfect scramble for a bare subsistence, and, if spared the actual pangs of want, the mental misery at lack of appreciation is intense. In such a case, a man's genius is the curse of his existence, and his wit a cause of the deepest melancholy. These thoughts should make the critic's task a grave anxiety, not to be lightly undertaken and carelessly executed, as is so often the case.

But we must not overrate the power of bad critics. They may tie a man down for awhile, and stick their little arrows into him, but they cannot prevent him being Gulliver, or make themselves other than Liliputians. Without public applause, a man of genius is unhappy; but when it comes, it gives him but little pleasure—a sensation, but nothing more. A great genius knows so well what the critics *will* say, that what they *do* say affords him but a passing pang. He laughs at them for laughing at him. He knows that the ultimate success of his work

is not a question of talent, but of time. The man of genius entertains such thoughts the more readily, as jealousy has no place in his composition. And herein lies a distinguishing mark between genius and talent. Clever people hate each other like poison, and express it with anger; but a man of genius, in discussing the merits of his rivals, always keeps his temper, and, if unknown or unpopular himself, speaks of his more fortunate inferiors with courteous contempt.

We believe talent becomes known much sooner than genius. Genius is original, different from anything that has gone before, and the acceptation of new things is a work of time. A clever man pushes his claims on the world with more energy and zeal, he has more impudence, and less modesty, than a man of genius, and he stoops to stepping-stones which the other would scorn to use. A clever man will write for third-rate journals, and he will bow and scrape to proprietors, editors, and publishers. A man of genius will not do any of these things. He will not throw his finest thoughts away on a third-rate audience, for all that he does must be well done. He insists that the dignity of genius shall be respected—and he is right. For these reasons, we take it to be a good sign in a young writer, that he soars high in his first attempts, even though he fail ignominiously.

We spoke just now of jealousy. We would not have the "green-eyed monster" stamped out. On the contrary, we would encourage it in the young: for jealousy is the wicked parent of ambition.

After all, what can we say of this greatest of living mysteries—a man of genius? He is not a man, but one hundred men in one. He is a living mass of contradictions. His mind is in direct communication with heaven and earth. He is at once the strongest and weakest of creatures. He may be wise and foolish, witty and dull, vicious and virtuous, pious and impious, and all these *without the slightest tinge of hypocrisy!* From what we can learn of such men from books, we must come to the conclusion that men of genius are certainly not so happy as ordinary men. The suffering they have endured is out of all proportion to their number. It would be well if we thought of this more often, and of how the sons of genius toil, that the world may be amused, enlightened, and made happy.

STEWART A. WYLLIE.

LOST HARMONY.

By Mary Cecil Hay.

BEFORE Aunt Anna went away (she was going to the afternoon concert with some friends, and to spend the evening with them afterwards) she told me to be careful that Herr Werkle's dinner should be ready when he returned, as she and I had dined together early. So remembering that—well, and perhaps for another reason too—I had burnt my face crimson by poking it over the whitebait in spite of cook's mild protestations, and had done my best to add a finishing touch of my own to everything. Then I put on my new blue ribbons, and sat down to my work, listening to every step upon the pavement outside. The concert must have been over an hour ago; what could keep him? I grew more and more restless, and Aunt Anna's pleasant drawing-room became lonely beyond words. I tried to read, and then to sing, but every effort failed, for I have none of those good qualities which make girls independent of outer loneliness. I walked in and out of the dining-room until Aunt Anna's solemn housemaid (who did not need my help) began to look curiously upon me. Then I wandered to Herr Heinrich's private sitting-room, and loitered there, and looked for him, and thought of him. The room was full of a sweet and softened light; the flowers filled it with a cool, delicious perfume, and his books and music were round me just as his hands had laid them down—the hands that loved them so. It was easy to think of him here. Almost day by day I could travel backward through these spring months, and live again that one hour from which now dated all my memories and all my dreams—the hour when Herr Heinrich Werkle came to be one of us, sent by an old friend who, like myself, had cause to know how kind Aunt Anna could be to the young and solitary. Of course Herr Werkle could afford to pay well for such a home as Aunt Anna gave him—living among us when he chose, yet always having this pleasant music-room which he could call his own—but I believe he knew quite well that what Aunt Anna gave him money could never buy.

And I—feeling always that he knew *that*—tried to excuse him for never extending one serious thought to me. I could not be surprised, because I knew I was a shallow, uninteresting girl, not at all, no, not at all pretty, whatever some people might have said: only just healthy and happy-looking—then, I mean; and possessing very little knowledge of the art which seemed his very life-breath. But I *did* resent it, because I was a woman and had known what it was to be liked and consulted

and appreciated. Few girls live to be twenty without knowing that, and the other experience comes rather bitterly afterwards.

The tree-shadows had grown long and dark in the gardens of the square, when he came into the room at last—softly, as he always comes, spell-bound, as I often fancy, by the mystic harmonies within. I rose slowly from my seat, trembling a little as I had lately learned to tremble, at his sudden presence, and spoke to him shyly.

"Herr Heinrich, are you not very late?"

He did not answer me—he very rarely does until I have spoken several times—but he just smiled into my eyes before he sat down to the piano and ran his fingers—carelessly, it seemed, yet full caressingly, over the keys.

As I said, I understand very little about such music as his; but this I *did* understand: that its tone always awakened in my heart an angry, wicked, terrible jealousy.

"Herr Heinrich, are you ready for dinner *now?*" I made my pause so emphatic that it obliged him to look up, but as usual his eyes were full of far-away thoughts, and he seemed listening only to some far-off melody. Even then, while he looked at without seeing me, his fingers took a new strength, a sudden nervous power, and for a few minutes even I was lost in a wonderful dream I could not comprehend. A dream which fell in fragments of intense bitterness when Heinrich ceased and—forgetting my very presence—began rapidly to fill a blank sheet of music paper that lay on the table, engrossed by the harmonies which seemed surging in his brain. I turned again, and spoke as hopefully as if I had not been rebuffed.

"Herr Heinrich, please don't wait until your dinner is quite ruined—do come."

He just looked up from his score to nod to me, humming softly as he did so: and then, in spite of all, he went back to his writing and forgot me again. My eyes were full of scalding tears when I ordered in the dinner. "It is cold and spoiled," I said: "go in and tell Mr. Werkle so."

Then I shut myself into Aunt Anna's drawing-room, and cried as if my heart would break. They were not, by very, very many, the first tears he had made me shed; nor was that the first time I brushed them hastily away in shame, and vowed that he should make me shed no more. In the midst of my tears I had heard Heinrich's quiet step cross the hall and enter the dining-room. Did he miss me? Did he wonder why I was not at my old post opposite him? I sat very upright at my work, defiantly dry-eyed now. It did not matter whether he missed me or not: I would *not* go. He should be as silent as he chose to be. Only what a pity it was that I had taken so much trouble studying the programme of that concert on purpose to be able to talk to him about it! for it had really been hard work to

me, who hardly knew a symphony from a sonata or a fugue from a fantasia.

Another quiet step across the hall, and the closing of Heinrich's music-room door. He had dined then in these few minutes, and had never missed me. Why *had* I learnt that programme off by heart; and dipped so eagerly into the life of Beethoven that I might talk a little with Heinrich of the man he loved—a most uninteresting life, I thought it, rapt and full of dreams like Heinrich's; oh, so sad? so sad! If I thought that Heinrich's life could ever be so——I don't think I finished the thought: it was too desolate a one. I took my work in my hand, smiled away all signs of tears and discontent, and went in to Heinrich with every appearance of utter light-heartedness.

"Herr Heinrich, now tell me about the concert," I said, and took a seat near him in the easiest manner possible. Of course he would be glad to talk of what he had enjoyed. Of course he would be glad of my sympathy.

"What could I tell you, Phyllis?" he asked, glancing up from his writing for just one moment. "There is nothing to tell."

"Why, there were grand performances," I said, strong in my lately-acquired knowledge. "There was a concerto of—of—"

"Nothing you would have cared for, Phyllis."

A lump, of huge dimensions, rose in my throat, and my eyes smarted unbearably with the tears which should *not* come. It was only by a mighty effort that I could quite calmly rise and leave the room again. How dare he treat me so, just because he knew I was not learned and talented, as he was, and could not help hating music because it was his idol!

I did not stir again from my work and my loneliness until Aunt Anna came in; and when, at eleven o'clock, Herr Werkle joined us for prayers, I would not look at him—at least, not when he could see. He still wore his concert dress, with a foreign order on his breast, and Aunt Anna had told me he was the handsomest man not only in the orchestra but even in the whole concert-room—as if she need have chosen just that mortifying time to say it!

I took the new blue ribbons out of my hair and hid them away. It was always the same—nothing new and pretty that I ever wore won a word or glance of admiration from him. Had he not once described a dress he liked, and had I not, as soon as I could, and with infinite labour, got that very dress? Had I not appeared first before him, full of suppressed excitement as to what he might say, and had he not gone on singing to himself just where he stood at the window? No, it did not signify how I looked: though perhaps if he saw me dismal and depressed——almost as quickly as the thought framed itself, my plan was formed.

I had always been early in the mornings; always busy and healthy-

looking; always ready to run on errands, or to laugh over any trifle. Now I began to droop; rather suddenly, it must be confessed, but still in a very natural manner. I lost my appetite and spirits; I sighed a good deal when anyone was within hearing, and leaned at the window always in the twilight, looking out in a weary and spiritless manner. I refused all invitations to walk or drive or visit, and sat apart from Aunt Anna and Heinrich when we all were together. I never roused myself when he came in, or ran to greet him as I had been used to do, and I always answered very low and tiredly when I was spoken to.

And all this time, while I tried so hard to droop and pine, his music maddened me. Often I knew I stopped it by the petulant, impatient words which rushed from my lips when, in my jealousy and despair, I saw how fully and entirely it could satisfy *him*. One night he brought me in a bunch of pure white lilies, and my heart beat until I feared he could see it. But before I had carried the flowers to my face he had shut himself into his own room, with the art he loved, ah me! so far beyond all earthly friends! I left the lilies lying about the drawing-room all evening, to fade, just where he could see them; moving them sometimes to bring them more surely within his notice. But I think he saw as little of my studied neglect as he did of the kisses I showered on my lilies that night before I locked them away among my few life-long treasures.

That was a wakeful and unhappy night for me, but in the morning I had determined to throw off this gloom in which I had voluntarily wrapped myself. I would be bright and helpful in the house; I would be kind and cheerful, always ready with aid and interest and sympathy. I would make myself *necessary* to everyone; I would make his life happy and pleasant. It was but a lonely life he led, at best, and I had often heard how he lightened the burden and brightened the lot of a poor and struggling artist-brother.

I came singing downstairs next morning in the blue ribbons which had lain hidden so long, and I laughed when I saw Heinrich watching me in grave surprise. I chatted volubly all day, and when he came from the opera that night he found me as wakeful as if it had been mid-day instead of midnight. But what difference did it make to him? He sat down to the piano, and went dreamily through parts of the opera he had heard, his head bent a little, and his eyes full of a deep and quiet happiness with which we knew that we had nothing to do.

Once that summer Heinrich had taken me to hear the opera, but instead of pleasure it was a cruel pain to me. An aching consciousness that he had forgotten my very existence marred all my enjoyment, and every strain which he rejoiced in stabbed me with a cruel pain. Perhaps—even though so engrossed—he saw this, for he never again proposed to take me, and never once had he taken me to hear his own music or his own matchless playing. And I was glad of this. I had

a wild, vague fancy that it would be worse than death to me to be one among a crowd of listeners to those wonderful tones which stirred me so terribly even in our own silent rooms at home, and to see the applause and adulation of thousands laid at his feet where my own had laid so long unnoticed.

All the attention and interest which I was ready to give after that last resolution of mine, he took most easily, and without comment; and even when I tried a little jesting and coquetting, just to tease and arouse him to retaliate, he generally only smiled down upon me, or spoke coolly of things far removed from the subjects on which I jested. Once, in the middle of a neat little provocation of mine, he rose and began to pace slowly up and down the room, his arms folded behind him and his head bent. I thought he was musing on what I had said, and would at last begin to tease me in return; but a few minutes afterwards he sat down and played an overture which is now of world-wide celebrity and introduces his first opera.

The summer days went on very slowly for me, filled with unspeakable anxiety, yet with a dangerous, treacherous happiness. My heart was light by nature (as perhaps all hearts must be which are so easily won) and therefore hope clung to me through all my disappointments and mortifications. Something would surely move this dreamy, concentrated soul of Heinrich's.

One morning as I stood in his room, looking round upon his favourite books and instruments and music, a new resolution formed itself in my mind: I would study for a time, and show him how possible it was even for me to appreciate the studies he loved.

I began at once to practise the music I had so long neglected. I worked indefatigably and ceaselessly at it; and, besides that, I slowly and studiously read the books of which I had oftenest heard him speak. Aunt Anna never interrupted me in these studies; indeed, she always contrived to make them easier for me, and at last came the night on which I meant to surprise Heinrich by my performance of a symphony of his own. It was a beautiful calm summer night, and Heinrich and I had been sitting apart at the two open windows, looking out upon the motionless leaves, and never speaking. Quietly at last I left my seat and went to the piano, determined not to look back at Heinrich, yet longing intensely to see if he were surprised. My fingers trembled so when I laid them on the keys that I had to wait and gather strength and courage as I could; then at last, in the utter silence, and seeing more distinctly than my notes the quiet figure at the open window, I began. I have no memory now of those minutes through which I played. The room whirled round me and my fingers lost their strength, while still I could play the notes I had learned, but whose soul I could not reach, then or ever. What I first remember is Herr Heinrich standing above me, his eyes full of pained surprise.

"Stay, Phyllis; you have utterly mistaken my meaning there. Let me show you."

He took my seat then, and played to me. I have heard the chords played since a hundred times, but never once as they were played that night—while I stood there beside the open window, as far from him as I could stand, my fingers locked together and my eyes wide and aching, as—to keep back the tears—I kept them fixed high among the dry and thirsty leaves in the gardens.

"That," said Heinrich, gravely, as he rose, "is what I meant, Phyllis."

"It is nothing," I said, my voice stiff and hard; "the notes were just as I played them."

"Yes," he said.

"And to put your own meaning in the chords, and then to call correctness a mistake of mine is cruel, and unfair, and ——"

The sentence was not finished, and I had rushed past him before he had answered a word. But after that I never tried to play to Heinrich; and I soon forgot the books, which I had studied on purpose that I might talk of them to him and he to me.

And thus the summer weeks went on. Herr Heinrich Werkle was acknowledged to be the first pianist in London—in England, people said: yet while the world grew wild and enthusiastic over his name he lived on just his old quiet life, devoted to his art, and happy in those high and solitary thoughts to which it alone could respond. And all this time I felt myself drifting farther and farther from him, by reason of my own jealous, angry thoughts.

"But suppose I am *not* here when you return, Herr Heinrich." He and I were in the hall together, as we happened to be going out at the same time, and I only said that in jest because he had seemed to take it so thoroughly for granted that I should be awaiting him when *he* returned.

He laughed as he opened the hall door. "I could not fancy it," he said. "Good-bye."

I turned back to kiss Aunt Anna again; for—quick as thought—at his words a new resolution had taken hold of me. I would *not* come home. Heinrich should miss me and want me. Perhaps he would even come to fetch me, and tell me how dull and chilly the house had seemed without me. Perhaps *then* he would remember how I had always made things as bright as I could for him; and how he *might* have been a little—different to me. Perhaps he would be sorry.

I had an old school friend living at Hampstead, and I went to her when my shopping was over, and we concocted a letter to Aunt Anna begging her to leave me "for a time."

That "time" seemed to be one of real enjoyment for us both, but I

know that, for me, it was miserable from my intense, suppressed excitement. Of course they missed me at home every hour of every day. What did Heinrich say of my absence? How strange it would seem to him to look in vain for my familiar figure! Would he tell me, when I returned, how long he thought these first summer days he had spent without me?

After barely a week's absence I went home, and I chose Sunday, and the evening time, to go, because I knew Heinrich would be there. I remember Aunt Anna was resting in her low chair beside the window, and opposite her stood Heinrich, reading aloud to her the words he had chosen for his oratorio. I stood to listen to the tones I loved; so eager, yet so reverent; and no one knew I was there until the words ceased.

"Aunt Anna, I am come."

She looked up gladly, and kissed me again and again as if she liked to have me back; then I shook hands with Herr Werkle. But I found I had not courage to ask them whether they had missed me, and could only try to read it in their faces, while I began at once to tell them of my visit. In my very first distinct pause, Heinrich slipped away. Was he so glad to be released from his kind effort to take my place, and was *this* all the difference my coming home had made to him?

"Yes, dear? Go on," put in Aunt Anna, wondering at my long pause.

"I—I forget, auntie." For how could I speak on glowingly and merrily, when my lips were twitching so, and when it was so hard to keep the tears out of sight? "He—you haven't missed me, auntie?"

"I have, my dear," she answered, with a tenderness which struck to my heart in the consciousness of how little I had thought of her. "But then we knew it was only for a few days."

We knew! Ah! yes, he knew it was only for a few days. I had not thought of that. Of course he would say, "It is only for a few days." It would be different if he had thought it was for ever. Suppose ——

"Phyllis," said Aunt Anna, presently, "go in and ask Herr Heinrich if he will take supper with you and me. We dined not very long ago, but still you must be hungry, and it will be more sociable to be together."

I thanked Aunt Anna in my heart. Of my own accord I could not have ventured into his room just then; but armed with a message from her, I was only too willing to go. He was not playing, or even reading, when I entered his room; only lying back in his chair upon the hearth, his hands quite still and idle, and his eyes turned from me.

"Herr Heinrich."

He rose at my call, and waited for what I had to say, though I

could see how little his thoughts followed my words, or his eyes took in the anxious questioning of mine. But when I had delivered Aunt Anna's message, he stood so still that I knew I might add those few words of my own which I had made up my mind to say.

"Weren't you glad to lose my worrying presence for a whole week, Herr Heinrich?"

"Glad! Why?"

My cheeks burned hotly in my angry pride, and my pulses began to throb painfully. I could see my own face in the glass opposite—eager, anxious, wistful. I could see his face before me, full of a great calm, a deep light shining in his dreamy eyes, and a tender look that was like a smile upon his lips.

"I mean," I said, and folded my hands upon the table to hide their trembling—the small, useless hands which had no affinity with the notes upon which his touch was magic. I mean," and I came a little nearer now and looked wistfully into his face, "did you—was I missed at all?"

"Missed? Of course. But then we knew you were enjoying yourself, and coming back in a few days."

Yes, it had been his thought, too.

"But suppose," I said, the words sounding very hopeful, though they were a little unsteady, "suppose I went away and did *not* come back."

"Is it probable?"

I do not quite think he knew he had even asked the question, for I saw that he had grasped again the train of thought which I had broken.

"It is very probable," I said, with emphasis.

He had his hand on the piano, but before he took his seat he turned and looked down kindly into my face.

"In your friend's house then you have met someone with whom you prefer to live."

The truth rushed to my lips so fiercely that I had hard work to keep it back. But I did more.

"Is that all you have to say to me," I asked, "on such a momentous matter?"

"No. I would tell you how glad I am to hear of it, if it is likely to bring you happiness."

That was all—uttered without a change of tone or face. While I stood wildly longing to ask him if he *really* thought there could be anyone in all the world with whom I would rather live than with Aunt Anna and himself, he began to play.

"Will you come, Herr Heinrich?" I put in, petulantly, the soft chords jarring on my evil, jealous temper. But he did not stop. The grand and touching melody, to which his soul had sung those wondrous words I had overheard him read, was finding voice for the first time, and what was my presence to him now? Longing to go away, longing

to deaden the sound of every note, I was still powerless to stir. Held by an irresistible impulse, I waited beside him, while the music, to my jealous fancy, surged in between us like a mighty barrier. And yet—and yet—it was so beautiful a thing to part us!

"I—I hate it."

So I answered, passionately, to his quiet question when he rose, and still in the Sunday hush around us lingered those mighty harmonies linked to the words divine.

"It is impossible, Phyllis," he said, quite gently, and with that light upon his face which held him so far from me in my petty aims and jealousy. "You mean you do not care for it."

"I mean I *hate* it," I cried, in greater passion. "How can I help hating it when you care for nothing else? Must we all worship your idol?"

"Not as I do, perhaps," he said, most earnestly. "But no heart capable of love could *hate* that heavenly gift."

"*No heart capable of love.*"

I repeated the words more than once, in a dazed sort of way, looking up into his face the while to search for that look which I could never find. And as I looked, the room swam round me, and the light all glided away from it. I can just remember stretching out both my burning hands for help, and—nothing more.

"It was excitement and fatigue," Aunt Anna said, sitting beside my bed when I opened my eyes at last; but I knew differently. Of course I hated Heinrich's music; I always had hated it. Had I not said so again and again? And was it not while I listened to it to-night, against my will, that there had rushed into my heart that last undying conviction that *this* was his life and love, and that what was his life and love was agony to me? Had not this truth, wrapped in the subtle, magic power of his own music, touched me with a pain like death? But surely in that one touch of agony it had passed. Never again would I make even one feeble effort to win the love he lavished on his art. I would turn to my lowly life and live it earnestly—but apart from his. And perhaps in years to come, when tidings reached me of the height to which his art had led him, I should be able to rejoice without those old sore pangs of jealousy and ambition. And he should never know ——

"Phyllis," Aunt Anna whispered, bending over me, "can you hear me? Do you see me? Look into my eyes, dear."

I fancied that she was speaking a long way off, farther even than my strained gaze could reach, though my eyes went searching among the dusky leaves, even beyond the small white clouds which fell and faded as I looked. No; I could not see her. She, too, had gone from me. With a cry, I raised my groping hands to feel, and then again the light all glided from my room.

* * * * * * *

I was ill a long, long time—I who before that summer never remembered a day's illness in my life; I who had so often been angry with my own healthiness, and longed to make my round pink cheeks look pale and interesting. They were white enough now; so white and pinched that on that morning, when I had managed to creep to the glass, I covered them with my hands and shrank away again, frightened to think how soon another change must follow this one, and yet almost glad to think that I had only to lie still and wait for it. I heard Aunt Anna whisper of a fever I had passed through, but I knew that even she (kind and constant as she had been to me) had not understood the beginning and would not understand the end—for did she not even now talk to me sometimes of the coming time which I should never see?

It was a very peaceful time. Aunt Anna was so kind to me, everybody seemed so good to me, and I had very little pain now, and was quite content. Yet often—very, very often—I was conscious of an aching want which—though it could not move me to suffering—was a faint shadow of that unrest of the early summer. There was no eagerness in the want though, now. It seemed part of my great weakness, and I understood it as little.

The trees before my windows were all gold and crimson tinted when at last I left my room, and—feeling a very shadow of myself in one of Aunt Anna's long white wrappers—was esconced beside the fire downstairs in Aunt Anna's own big chair. She had closed the door upon us, and said she was rejoiced at having me about again, yet every now and then she looked into my face so piteously that I fancied its whiteness startled her now as it had startled me before. And then she went and sat apart where I could not see her eyes. I lay quite still, and resting: yet, stronger upon me than ever, was that old longing which even yet I had not learned to comprehend. What *could* I miss, while I was so tenderly loved and cherished?

"Aunt Anna."

We had both of us been so long silent, that my low call startled myself as well as her. She was beside me in a moment, with her gentle hand upon my head.

"There is one thing I have missed through all my illness—Heinrich's music."

"Yes, dear."

"Why?"

She did not answer, and I saw her eyes were full of tears.

"Is he—gone?"

"My darling, have I not told you of him every day through these sad weeks? Has he not always been anxious about you; always kind and helpful to me? Do you not remember what I have told you?"

"Yes; but the house has been so silent, auntie. To-day—now—I

began to fancy you might have said that to soothe me, and that he was —gone."

"No; he is with us still, my child."

"But has not played."

"No—you were so ill, my darling."

She said this softly, thinking it was the real reason, but I remembered only how my last words to him had been of angry, passionate hatred for his music.

"Where is he now?"

"In his own room, dear."

"Oh, Aunt Anna, will you ask him to play to me? Tell him—no, how can you tell him the thoughts I do not understand even myself? Only ask him to play to me. Oh, auntie, if he will play I may get well."

Her tears dropped down upon my raised, clasped hands when she took them in her own; then, without a word, she went.

She did not come back to me, but presently Heinrich's music stole into the room; gathered about me; filled my heart; and held me there entranced. It was very soft and dreamy, lulling and soothing me, and bringing fair, sweet dreams about me; and I could not realise that *this* was the voice of power and of passion on whose wings my soul had ever been too weak to rise. It could not be; for this awoke an answering voice within me. I too could feel my thoughts rise and my heart expand. It was beautiful—oh, so beautiful!—and the spirit voices spoke to *me*. I rose and stood, trembling in every limb; and just at that moment the sound ceased—quite suddenly; midway in a dreamlike, exquisite melody.

I did not stop to think. With feeble steps and weak hands, groping for support, I entered Heinrich's room and paused within the threshold. He still sat before the piano, but his hands were locked upon the desk before him, and his face buried in them.

"Oh, Heinrich," I cried, in my weakness and the earnestness of my appeal, "why did you stop? The silence came like tears, and it was *so* beautiful! Play once again. It is all beautiful and real to me to-night. Oh, Heinrich, *now* I understand it; *now* I love it."

"Phyllis," he said—and, oh, could my thin, white face have startled him, as his, in its worn and deep anxiety, startled me then!—"I have broken down for the first time."

"You—you have had so little practice. You have been so silent for my sake. You thought I hated it—I told you so, but it was not true, Heinrich. My own bad passions came between, and I could not *reach* it. But to-night it was all different. No selfish, jealous thoughts make discord for me now. Oh, Heinrich, I can understand it now. It was so beautiful—only so sad. Why did you stop? Surely you love it still—just as you did."

"Yes; just as I did," he answered, and his voice trembled in some new and deep emotion as he turned and took my hands in his.

"With all your heart—just as you used to do?" I questioned, gazing into his face, and wondering what were the changes there.

Before he answered he put his strong and gentle arms about me—because I was so frail and weak. Then he only said, "No, not with all my heart, sweet. I have learned by sad experience that the little friend whom I have missed so long is far, far dearer to me even than my art."

I forget whether that was quite all he said. But at any rate, I soon got well.

WHAT TO WISH: AND HOW.

IN youth—long past—we wished, believing
Our wish the herald of receiving;
But Time too soon the lesson taught,
That even our strongest wish is naught.

In age, we scarcely wish without
Some feeling of a latent doubt;
So oft deluded in our hope,
We fear to give our fancy scope.

But hope and fear alike are known
In this frail, fleeting life alone;
In that to come, all doubt is o'er,
And the full soul will wish no more.

Let every wish then, mortal, here
Be such as can be made a prayer;
And these, if breathed to heaven, we know
Our Lord hath promised to bestow.

Thus sought, and thus divinely given,
Each wish becomes a step to heaven.
While, as the gold in Arab tale,
At morning turns to useless shale,
E'en so, the worldly wish, obtained,
Proves but some disappointment gained.

IGNOTA.

AN UNSOLVED MYSTERY.

ABOUT the close of the eighteenth century, the fashionable life of Dublin was in its zenith; the Ranelagh Gardens were the resort of the beaux and belles of the day; the Parliament was held in College Green; and its members had their town residences in Dublin, and lived there for a considerable portion of the year.

One of the members, an illustrious Irish nobleman who had spent some portion of his youth in Italy, was a man of cultivated taste and refinement. Upon his return to Dublin, he conceived the idea of inviting over some Italian artists to decorate the walls and ceilings of his residence after the Florentine manner. He carried out his idea, and the ornamentations of Charlemont House bear witness to the taste and skill of the decorators. Other noblemen employed these artists; the present Royal Irish Academy House, then a noble, private residence, is similarly decorated; also several other city mansions in several of the leading streets and squares.

When Dublin decreased in importance after the Act of Union in 1801, and was no longer the centre of fashion for the Irish nobility, its splendid private residences gradually decayed; and wealthy burghers and Dublin's proverbially professional aristocracy, now inhabit them. Many of the houses yet retain their curious, rare old decorations, and of one of these residences, situated in a leading square, we would more especially speak.

A large, stately, gloomy-looking house, with a ponderous hall-door, studded with iron nails, like the door of a cathedral. High, narrow windows with Italian jalousies. The grass grows in the interstices of the high, steep steps, now fast falling away. The rusty iron railings have become loosened in their stone settings, and seem as though a good push would hurl them into the mouldering, vault-like areas. Entering the hall, a damp, earthy smell greets the intruder—for, intruder must anyone be considered who ventures into that region of ghostliness. The wide, flagged, echoing hall, the broad, dark, oak-panneled staircase, lead to chambers awful in their oppressive sense of loneliness and utter desolation. Cobwebs festoon the painted walls; queer, crawling creatures hold high holiday on the once polished floors; but not even the squeak of a rat or a mouse breaks the solemn, death-like stillness which pervades this old, deserted mansion.

> "Over all there hung a cloud of fear,
> A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
> And said, as plain as whisper to the ear,
> 'The house is haunted.'"

Twenty-five years ago this house was tenanted by Miss Steele, an eccentric old lady, who, dying suddenly at the advanced age of ninety-one, her property—including this house and furniture—came into the possession of a married grand-niece living in Kildare, whom she had never seen. The season in Dublin was just commencing about the time that all preliminary law-matters connected with the property were being settled, and the heiress, Mrs. Nugent, acting upon the advice of her lawyer, resolved to let the house furnished. The furniture, although antique, was handsome; especially that of the drawing-room. The walls and ceilings of this apartment were superbly ornamented in the Florentine style. Arabesques on a pale blue ground adorned the ceilings; the panels of the walls were painted with groups of figures or rare pieces of still-life; whilst from the mouldings which separated these panels, sprang figures which, bending downwards, held the candelabra lighting the apartment. The furniture was in keeping with the architecture—of inlaid wood, heavy with gilding and upholstered in amber satin; it was of that stately and old-world type which suggested the days of minuets, apple-blossom sacques, cherry-coloured satin petticoats, and high-heeled shoes. A spindle-legged spinnet stood near the fireplace, wherein was no grate, but great brass dogs. The fireplace was tiled with the queer little Dutch tiles that came over with the tulips in the days of William and Mary. These tiles bore a succession of Adams and Eves, of Cains and Abels, and other scriptural characters, who looked sadly out of place amongst the nymphs, and satyrs, and similar profanities which surrounded the chamber.

The house was no sooner advertised, than it was immediately taken by an officer then quartered in Dublin. Being a man of taste, Colonel Comyers would not allow the house to be remodelled in any way. Mrs. Comyers, too, was a woman who liked novelty, and she triumphantly pictured to herself what a delightful sensation her antique-looking drawing-room would create when well lighted up and filled with a fashionable mob. A pretty, piquante little woman, she was enthusiastically charmed, enchanted, with her Irish residence. One day, about the beginning of October, she moved into it, with her two infant children, and two servants that she had brought from England—a cook and a nurse. For the first night she had no other servants in the house.

Upon the first evening of Mrs. Comyers' arrival, her husband was obliged to spend the day and night from home. She amused herself by wandering about the old house, prying into musty cabinets and cupboards, looking with wondering and admiring eyes upon the rare old Venetian glass and egg-shell china, which seemed almost too fine and too delicate for use. About half-past six o'clock, as she sat in the drawing-room, the nurse entered, saying that it was necessary for her to go out to buy some things urgently required. The woman respect-

fully asked her mistress if she would go up to the nursery to the children should she hear them cry.

"Certainly, nurse. I suppose you will not be very long away?"

"I cannot say, madam. I do not know Dublin."

"Then I think cook had better go with you—she has been here before. I daresay no one will call this evening."

"Thank you, madam," and the nurse left the room. Presently, Mrs. Comyers heard the hall-door closed, and the two women's footsteps echoing down the steps.

A quarter of an hour—twenty minutes passed. The doors between the drawing-room and the nursery, two flights higher up, were left open, so that Mrs. Comyers could hear every sound. The evening was fast closing in, and she experienced a strange feeling of loneliness, and began to regret her foolish impulse in allowing both servants to go out. She laid down the book she had been reading, and presently one of the children gave a cry.

The mother started from the couch where she was reclining, and was about to go up to the nursery, when hurried footsteps on the stairs struck upon her ear.

"Oh! I need not go," she said to herself; "I suppose cook has stayed at home, after all:" and, having by this time reached the door, she indeed saw, by the waning light, the figure of an elderly woman turning the landing of the flight upstairs opposite to her. Mrs. Comyers returned to her sofa. But the child's crying did not cease; and as she listened, it increased from a whining cry to a wail of terror. In alarm she started up and ran to the nursery. The eldest boy, a child of three years old, was sitting up in bed, shrieking; but the cook was nowhere to be seen.

In vain Mrs. Comyers tried to pacify the child. "Freddy," she asked, "did not cook come up to you?"

But the child only sobbed the more convulsively; so much so, that the mother refrained from asking any further questions. Softly singing to him, he was soon asleep again, and she stole quietly from the room. It was almost dark, yet she distinctly saw, walking a few steps before her, the figure of the woman which she yet believed to be the cook.

"Why, cook, I thought you had gone out with nurse."

The figure had just reached the bottom of the flight of stairs; it turned slowly round, revealing the face of an old woman with a white cap-border closely crimped around her puckered-up, leering face. A gruesome, weird light seemed to surround her, so that Mrs. Comyers distinctly saw the shrivelled lips move, the bleared eyes gleam; and the shaky, skinny hand, which was raised and shaken menacingly at her. The figure then turned and ran swiftly down the stairs.

For a moment, Mrs. Comyers was frightened; but, girding up her courage, she blamed herself for giving way to nervousness—persuading

herself that it must be some person engaged by the cook. She walked slowly down the stairs, her heart beating violently, and called out, courageously:

"My good woman, who are you; and what is your business here?"

For answer, a chuckling laugh resounded throughout the echoing old house. The clatter of many feet was heard upon the stairs; still, the brave little woman hardly quailed. But what was she to do? She was too terrified to venture after the figure. Just then, there was a knock at the hall-door, and, with a sense of relief, she hastened down to open it. The two women-servants entered.

"Cook," said Mrs. Comyers, "did you leave anyone in the house during your absence?"

"No, madam."

"Well, you had better go and look in the kitchen, for some woman went down the stairs just now."

Lights were speedily procured, and every inch of the basement story was unavailingly searched. The doors were then secured, and as Mrs. Comyers saw the servants were rather frightened, she wisely refrained from entering into any particulars concerning either the manner of the figure, or the strange noises which she had heard.

The next day she related the circumstance to her husband, who laughed at her nervous fancies, and practically suggested that a close eye be kept on the area gate. The weeks flew by, and the affair seemed to be almost forgotten; until one evening, as Colonel and Mrs. Comyers sat alone in the dining-room, the sound of many footsteps was heard in the drawing-room overhead, and a plaintive air was played upon the old spinnet. They listened, amazed, for a minute, and at length Mrs. Comyers said:

"Henry, I am sure it is that—that thing!"

"You little goose!" he exclaimed, laughing. "Stay where you are, and I'll go and see."

He bounded up the stairs—there was a hurried shuffling of feet: the music ceased, and he soon returned. The scene he had witnessed he could not relate to his nervous, delicate wife. Therefore, to avoid being questioned, he said, with an assumption of gaiety:

"Mabel, congratulate me! I have at last seen your mythical old woman!"

Mrs. Comyers shivered, and nestled into her husband's sheltering arms, as she whispered, faintly: "Yes, I know you have seen her, for I saw her go before you out of the room."

They could not account for the phenomenon, and naturally were diffident about mentioning it to anyone. Thus the time passed on until Christmas.

With the Christmas-time, there arrived a nephew of Colonel Comyers. Clever, handsome, merry Val Wychérley: a young

doctor who had just taken out his diploma. He had passed a brilliant examination, and before again resuming work, had come to spend a few weeks in Dublin, for the purpose of resting his overtasked brain. It was agreed that he should not be told anything about the mysterious old woman.

On Christmas Day a number of friends were expected to dine. There was also to be an evening party; therefore, in order to save trouble, Mrs. Comyers had had the dining-table arranged early in the afternoon, and then locked the door. She was very proud of her daintily-arranged table: she had tastefully disposed the quaint-coloured and gilt Venetian glass, and the rare old china belonging to the house. Groups of shepherds and shepherdesses holding cornucopiæ filled with glistening holly, interspersed with its own bright red berries and the snowy white ones of those of the mistletoe, were placed at intervals along the table.

About five in the afternoon, as Colonel Comyers and his nephew were sauntering home round the square, a sudden and heavy shower came on. They walked fast, but by the time they arrived at the hall-door they were thoroughly drenched. Colonel Comyers immediately went into his dressing-room on the first landing, inviting his nephew to follow; but that free-and-easy young gentleman preferred taking off his wet boots in the hall.

"Here, Bridget!—Mary!—Whoever you are, take these boots, like a good girl," said he, addressing a woman standing in the shade at the top of the kitchen-stairs.

An aged woman, habited in an old-fashioned black gown, with a white handkerchief pinned across her bosom, approached him. He threw the boots to her, and, to his horror, *they went through her!* and then the figure vanished! Val, being a doctor, his practical thought was, "By Jove! my head must be in a precious queer state! a bad look-out for me, and Christmas fare in prospective. I had better say nothing, however, or these good folk may think I am completely off my head."

He walked slowly up the stairs, and on the first landing again was the figure. It preceded him step by step, but Val did not feel frightened; as before, ascribing the vision to purely physical causes acting upon a brain which he felt was overtasked. Although a medical man, it did not occur to him to apply the unfailing test of pressing one eye so as to throw it out of the parallel focus with the other. If the object be the result of hallucination, it is seen still and simply; if actual vision, it is seen double. The figure entered the drawing-room. Val mechanically followed it; and there, what a scene met his eye!

On the polished oaken floor near the fireplace lay the body of a young and beautiful foreign-looking woman richly dressed. There were wounds about her neck half-concealed by her long raven-black hair. A tall, dark-complexioned man stood near, holding a long, thin

Venetian stiletto, whilst beside him stood the old woman, who laughed a fearful laugh, as she spurned the body with her foot!

As she laughed, the vision faded, and Val Wycherley left the drawing-room, uneasy for his brain. At the door he was met by Mrs. Comyers who insisted upon his coming down to see her pretty dinner-table. Colonel Comyers was also one of the privileged, and the proud young housekeeper unlocked the dining-room door, when lo!—all the exquisite old china and glass lay in fragments upon the floor! The table-cloth was pulled away, and all the pretty decorations ruthlessly destroyed! In a recess near the fireplace stood a dark, foreign-looking man and the old woman, both of whom laughed devilishly, and then vanished! The scene was witnessed by the three. Mrs. Comyers fainted in her husband's arms. A serious nervous illness followed, and as soon as it was practicable she was removed from the house.

Val Wycherley recounted his experiences in the drawing-room, and Colonel Comyers admitted that he had witnessed the same scene. Of course they left the house, but refrained from making the reason public, beyond telling the proprietors; who, naturally, did not credit it. But tenant after tenant left, scared away by strange noises and appearances, and the house fell gradually into its present state of decay: not even a care-taker could be induced to remain in it.

The main facts of the preceding story are perfectly true, and were related to the writer by Mrs. Nugent's daughter, the present proprietress of the ill-fated house.

E. Owens Blackburne.

PARKWATER.

By the Author of "East Lynne."

CHAPTER XII.

THE COUNTRYWOMAN.

THERE appeared one day before the gate of a rather handsome house, some little distance north of the Regent's Park, a countrywoman carrying a child and a bundle. The moment she was inside the gate, she put the child down, and, with a movement that bespoke fatigue, led him to the door and rang—a humble ring.

"I want to see the missis, please," she said to the maid-servant who answered it, her accent being very broad.

"What for?" inquired the girl, scanning the applicant; who, however, looked far too respectable for one of the begging fraternity. "My mistress is not at liberty to anybody this morning. I can't admit you."

"Then I must sit down with the child on this here step, and wait till she can see me," returned the woman, in a perfectly civil, but determined voice.

"It's not of any use your waiting. This is the day the new people come in, and the rooms are not ready for them, in consequence of the mistress being called from home last week to stop with her sister, who was taken ill. Me and the cook and missis are all busy, and she can't be interrupted."

"I'm sorry to hinder work," returned the stranger, "but it's your missis's own fault, for changing her house and never telling me. If it's not convenient for me to sit down in the kitchen, I'll wait here; but see her I must, for this is a'most my last day. Perhaps, young woman, you'd be so obleeging as mention that it's Mrs. Thrupp, with little Ran."

The servant began to think she might be doing wrong to refuse, the more especially as the woman alluded to things which she did not understand; and, leaving the visitor standing there, proceeded to inform her mistress. She returned almost immediately. "You are to walk in," she said; "but my mistress says she does not know anybody of your name."

The countrywoman was shown into a nicely-furnished parlour, and Mrs. Cooke came to her. A tall, stately widow lady, in a black silk dress that rustled as she walked. She had recently lost her husband, and, with him, a large portion of her income. Unwilling to vacate her house, which was her own, and by far too large for her reduced means,

she had come to the resolution of letting part of it if she could find any friends to come to it. And this she had done.

The countrywoman dropped a curtsey. "I should be glad, mum, if you please, to see the missis."

"I am the mistress," answered Mrs. Cooke.

The stranger looked confounded. She put the child down, whom she had again taken in her arms, telling him to be still: but indeed he seemed to be a quiet, tractable little fellow. Searching in her pocket, she drew forth a piece of paper.

"Be so obleeging as to read it, mum," she said. "That's the direction as they give me, and I'm sure I thought I had come right. If not, perhaps you'd be good enough to direct me, for I'm a'most moithered in this great Lunnon town, and half dead a-carrying of the child. There seems to be no end to the streets and roads and turnings."

"This is my address, certainly," said the lady, looking at the paper. "Who gave it you? What is your business? I have lived here many years. I am Mrs. Cooke."

"The lady I want is not you at all, mum. She is young. They told me she lived here. She used to live there," showing the back of a letter, "and that's where I went after her, yesterday. But the people there said she had left them ever so many weeks back, and had got a house of her own, and they wrote down the address for me. They said, mum, that they only knew it by the man as came for her piano telling them where he was going to take it to, for she did not tell them herself."

"Now it is explained," said Mrs. Cooke. "The lady you speak of has taken part of my house. Mrs. Lyvett."

"That's not the name," quickly observed the woman.

"Perhaps not the one you knew her by. She is just married."

"Married again, is she! Well, mum, I must see her, if you please."

"She is not here yet. They are in the country, and are coming home to-day."

"That's bad news for me," said the stranger, after a pause. "What time is she expected?"

"It is uncertain. Probably not much before six. They have ordered dinner for that hour."

"Good patience! what am I to do?" exclaimed the woman. "And the ship a-going to sail on Saturday, and not a thing yet got together! Good lady! if you'd let me leave them with you?"

"Leave what?"

"The child and his bundle of things, and a little matter of money I have got to return."

"My good woman," said Mrs. Cooke, "I do not understand you. Leave them for what purpose?"

"To hand over to—what did you please to say her name was now?"

"Mrs. Lyvett?"

"Ay, Mrs. Lyvett. I am a rare bad one at minding names. He's a year and nine months old, and we have had the care of him since he was quite an infant. But now, me and my husband have joined the Land Emigrant Society to Sydney, and I can't keep him no longer."

"Whose child is it?" inquired the astonished Mrs. Cooke.

"Well, mum, that has never been told to us quite direct. The lady did not say. His father, poor little fellow, was abroad fighting. He have died since."

The woman stopped to wipe her hot face; Mrs. Cooke listened in a maze of perplexity.

"A month or more ago," proceeded the woman, "there came a man down to our country parts, mum; a agent, they called him, of the Foreign Land Society, and he persuaded a many of us to go out; so I wrote to tell the lady of it, and that she must find another place for little Randy. No answer came, mum, and we wrote again, and then we wrote a third time; and still no notice was took. Very ill-convenient it was for me to keep him while we sold off our things and journeyed up here; but what was I to do? We got up yesterday, and I went to the place where she used to live, and found she had moved from there, and had come here."

"I think there must be some mistake," returned Mrs. Cooke, wondering greatly. "I do not believe we can be speaking of the same person."

"Oh, yes, we are, mum. Leastways, I should think so. I saw our own letters a-waiting there on the mantle-shelf. She ordered the people to keep all letters safe for her till she sent for them."

"What was the lady's name?"

"Mrs. Penryn: the same as the child's. I fancy she is his aunt."

"Then we are speaking of different people. This lady, before she became Mrs. Lyvett, was Miss May."

"It is so, mum. Once, when she got behind in her payments—for it's she that has always paid us for the child, though she has not told us who the parents are—my husband journeyed all the way to Lunnon to see about it. She was going by her maiden name, he found, Miss May: it was more convenient, she explained to him, for her school and music teaching. The payment has been quicker lately, and some that's remaining in hand I have brought back. It's sixteen shilling, mum; which I'd leave, please, with the child."

"You cannot leave the child. It is quite impossible that I can receive so extraordinary a charge. I must decline to interfere. Indeed, I am sorry to have been told this."

"Dear, good lady, pray be merciful! Not a thing can I set about while I'm saddled with this child; and we a-going out o' dock on

Saturday! He's such a dreadful weight to carry about, and we be a-stopping all down in Rotherhithe. Mrs. Penryn must take him and give him back to his mother."

"Perhaps he has no mother?"

"Oh, yes, he has, mum. She sends messages to him in Mrs. Penryn's letters."

Mrs. Cooke considered. She saw that the person before her was, beyond doubt, a decent and honest countrywoman. The story was a very curious one. Mr. Frederick Lyvett's connexions were so highly estimable; could it be that the lady he had married was less so? She felt perfectly certain that he did not know of his wife's previous marriage: she knew him very well indeed, and he would be sure to have mentioned it to her. That Miss May was not his equal, and that he had married her against the wish of his family, he had told her freely. If Miss May was indeed Mrs. Penryn, why had she concealed it from him?

"All I can do," she said aloud, "is to allow you to wait here till Mrs. Lyvett returns. You can have some dinner with my servants. But I must request you not to speak of this matter to them, for it would not be prudent."

Early in the afternoon, and before the house was well ready to receive them, the travellers arrived. Frederick Lyvett handed his wife from the carriage, brought her in, introduced her to Mrs. Cooke, and waited while that lady installed them in their apartments. He then hastened away: there was time for him to run down to the office before dinner. Not a single word had Fred heard from his father or mother, or anybody connected with him, during his absence. He had written, but his letters obtained no answers.

The servants carried the luggage upstairs, and Mrs. Lyvett cast scrutinising glances over her new home. The drawing-rooms were handsome enough to satisfy even her: and she was growing tolerably particular. She then went into the sleeping-room, and told the servants to uncord the boxes. Mrs. Cooke had gone downstairs again. Some instinct had prevented her from speaking of the subject which had troubled her. The better plan, she thought, would be to send the woman up herself.

The servants uncorded the boxes, and retreated. Mrs. Lyvett knelt down before one of the trunks, and was taking out some of the things, when a knock was heard at the door, and the countrywoman entered. She was leading the boy; who was dressed in a blue cotton frock and pinafore, his light hair dispersed in pretty curls over his little head. She carried the bundle in her hand, and his hat and cape. Mrs. Lyvett stared in amazement.

"Mum, you have forgot me, I see; but sure you have not forgot your little ward—the child. I be Mrs. Thrupp, from Suffolk. Randy, give

your hand to the lady, and hold up your pretty face. Indeed then, mum, I see a likeness in it to yours: we thought he might be some blood relation."

To describe the startling effect this had upon Mrs. Lyvett would be a difficult task. A spasm took her face; its colour became livid, as if she were ready for the grave. The child, led up to her by Mrs. Thrupp, held out his hand, but she started from him with a cry of agony.

"Why have you come here? Why have you brought him?" were the first connected words she gasped forth, in a piteous, wailing tone. And the woman explained why: just as she had to Mrs. Cooke.

That she was shocked, startled, frightened, and in no measured degree, was evident to the countrywoman. But in a few moments Mrs. Lyvett's mood changed: anger replaced her fear. Taking a haughty tone, she refused to receive the child. She was not his mother, she said, and did not at present know where his mother was to be found. But Mrs. Thrupp quietly said she should leave him.

Seemingly at her wits' end, and all her hauteur forgotten, Mrs. Lyvett resumed. Entreaties, promises, were in turn resorted to, to induce Mrs. Thrupp to take away the child and keep him; to take him to Australia; to put him out to nurse in London; anywhere, with anybody; do with him what she would. Mrs. Thrupp steadily refused to comply. Not, she said, that she did not feel the parting with him: she loved him as a child of her own. The boy was frightened, hid his face in his nurse's dress, and cried out aloud. Mrs. Lyvett, rendered uncontrollable by the noise, and hoping to stop it, seized the child and shook him. He screamed out all the louder, for very terror; and she beat him about the ears, and shook him still till his breath was gone.

"Good mercy!" uttered the Suffolk woman, as she tore him from Mrs. Lyvett, and folded him in her sheltering arms, "there'll be mischief done next. Why, you have got no kindness o' nature about you, mum! It's no fault of his, poor child, that I can't keep him."

"You must take him with you," Mrs. Fred Lyvett continued to urge, but in a subdued voice, as if fearful it should be heard outside. "You must."

"I have said I cannot," returned the woman; "where's the good o' my repeating it, mum? We have hired ourselves out, over seas, to do hand-labour, and it's not possible for me to be encumbered with a child."

"And yet you would encumber me with him!"

"But it's your right to take him, mum. You must know who he is: you've always paid for him. Anyway, I can't carry him with me."

"Put him out in London, then," again frantically urged Mrs. Lyvett. "Find people to take him; I will pay you well. Look here," she added, opening a purse and pouring out the sovereigns with her shaking hands, "you shall have it all. Here's a bank-note as well."

"Mum, I thank ye, but I have not a minute of my own, and we don't know a soul in this big city. My husband will be a'most ready to beat me for the time I'm losing to-day. Money is not of so much value to us now as time: and we be going where they say we shall get plenty. And now I must say good-bye to you, Randy. Lord help ye, child, and raise you up a friend in your need."

She tried to unwind his arms, but the child sobbed and moaned, and clung to her.

"I haven't got the heart to do it," she said, the tears dropping from her eyes on his little face. "I'll get him to sleep afore I go, and we'll part that way. There, dear: Randy shall go to sleep with nursey."

She untied the strings of her bonnet, leaned her face on the little child's, rocked him in her arms, and began a low, chanting sort of ditty. It was her favourite mode of hushing him to sleep, and the boy, exhausted by the recent scene, was soon soothed to it.

"He's as fast as a church now," she whispered. "I suppose I may lay him down on the bed."

Mrs. Lyvett offered no opposition. She sat like one stupefied, opposite to the woman and child, looking at them and biting her lips. Mrs. Thrupp cleared a place on the bed amid the articles that had been carelessly thrown on it—shawls, paper, cord—turned down the coverlet, gently laid the child on the blanket, kissed him, and covered him up.

"Now, mum, I'll wish you good-day," she said, "and good luck in this world, if we should never meet again. But, oh! think better of the hard things you have said, and be kind to little Randy, till you give him up to his own people."

She had got out of the room, when Mrs. Lyvett, as if a sudden thought struck her, opened the door and called her back. The woman returned, but somewhat reluctantly, for she was indeed pressed for time.

"You will oblige me," said Mrs. Lyvett—and she was now as calm as the sky in summer—"by going out of this house at once, without exchanging a word with anyone."

"And that's what I mean to do, mum. To-day can't be no day of gossiping for me."

"Then go down quietly, so that the household does not hear you, and let yourself out. I wish it. Here is something to drink Randolphe's health on his next birthday," she added, putting a sovereign in her hand.

"Mum, I thank you, and we'll do it heartily. It's in September, you know, and I hope we shall then be nearing the other side. Mum," she added, the tears rising to her eyes, "you will surely be kind to him as long as he stays with you?"

"Of course I shall be kind. But I was put out just now. You

ought to have given me notice of bringing him, and then I would have provided for it. There is no accommodation for him here, and I'm sure I don't know how I shall manage with him until his mother comes back to town. I wish you a safe journey."

The woman, obedient to Mrs. Lyvett's wishes, went quietly down the stairs and left the house. The hall door was somewhat difficult to shut outside, and as she proceeded along the garden path, she turned round—to make sure she had not left it open. Mrs. Cooke was standing at her parlour window, watching her over the short venetian blind. It was a warm June day, and the window was wide open. Mrs. Thrupp dropped a curtsey.

"I'm obleeged, mum, for your hospitality, and feel it was kind of you to bestow it on a stranger, such as me."

The lady nodded in reply, and the countrywoman passed out at the gate, just as the clocks were chiming four.

Now we cannot follow the thoughts and acts of Mrs. Lyvett. What really passed in that chamber, after the departure of the woman, was seen by none: by none, save herself and heaven. That she was in a perplexing predicament it would be folly to deny. Any minute between then and six o'clock she might expect her husband home. Naturally he would be surprised at the new inmate; naturally he would say, Whose is the child? Sophia might reply, It is the child of a friend of mine. Who is the friend, and where is she? would be the next question: and she knew her husband quite well enough by this time to make sure he would insist upon the question being satisfactorily answered. Frederick Lyvett might be (as she paid him the compliment to think) rather soft in some matters, but at least he possessed a nice sense of honour, and had the instincts of a gentleman. What if she were not able to find this friend, the mother?—what if she were out of town, as intimated to the countrywoman, and not to be got at? And—putting the poor child aside—in the examination into matters that her husband would inevitably set afloat, what past inconveniences and episodes might not come to light! Whether she had been married before, or whether she had not been, she had certainly called herself Mrs. Penryn. Who was Mr. Penryn, and where was he?

When she had knelt at the altar by Frederick Lyvett's side, and the officiating minister had adjured her to declare whether there was any impediment to her being wedded in holy matrimony, and to answer as she would answer at the dreadful Day of Judgment, she had held her peace.

What if she now avowed a previous marriage to her husband? Would it avail her? She would have to furnish proofs of it, and of Mr. Penryn's death. And it might be that she could do neither the one nor the other. Alas! alas!

Sitting there, opposite the calmly sleeping child, all these thoughts

and suggestions passed rapidly through her mind in a wild chaos. We cannot tell how they affected her, what terrible mischief they may have wrought upon her brain. She had never gone through an hour's agony such as this, she had never been in a strait so fearful.

In one sense of the word she was not altogether inexperienced in these shoals and quicksands of life; for the Caterpillar romances and French novels on which she had been nurtured and on which her mind had been formed—if it was formed on anything—abounded in such. That very fact had probably caused her path in later years to be more complicated than its events would otherwise have made it. Quite a repository of resorts, to which the various heroines had been driven to fly to from unmerited dilemmas, lay stored in her memory: many and many a time had she, in sympathetic imagination, put herself in their places, and said, I should have done this; or that: and the doing of this or that had all seemed very easy! Things appear easy in theory to most of us: but when that theory has to be reduced to practice, they assume an aspect altogether different. Sophia hitherto had revelled in the specious trials of romance; now she was brought face to face with stern reality.

She wrung her hands; she would have shed scalding tears but that her burning eyes dried them; she shrank from looking at the little sleeper on the bed. Ever afterwards she believed, honestly believed, that the trouble bereft her of her senses; that she was not, in that dreadful hour, responsible for her actions.

CHAPTER XIII.

A FIT OF SHIVERING.

FREDERICK LYVETT proceeded to the office, and entered his own room. Very much surprised was he to see Mr. Jones (now of some consequence in the house) seated at his desk.

"How are you, Jones?" said he, shaking him by the hand. "What's going on, out of the common?"

"Nothing," replied Mr. Jones. "Why?"

"That you are in this room?"

"That's the governor's doing," said Mr. Jones confidentially, alluding to the head of the firm. "Wish you joy, Fred. How's Madam?"

"Quite well. Let me come there."

"I say, it was too bad to steal a march upon us all. 'Twould have been but civil to invite a fellow to the wedding."

"Get out of the way, Jones. I want to come to my place. Pretty cool, I think, your usurping it."

Mr. Jones laughed. "I dare not get out, Fred. The firm ha

assigned this place to me, for good and all. I am a member of it now."

"Don't talk to me in that strain."

"It's true. I signed articles yesterday."

Frederick Lyvett looked at him for a few moments, as if unable to take in the information. "*You signed articles yesterday!* What on earth do you mean?"

"Just that. They have made me a partner. Not to any great extent yet awhile, but still they have made me one of them, and given me a share."

"Is my father in his room?"

"I suppose so. I say, stop a minute. How you whirl yourself off from one!"

"Well?"

Mr. Jones suddenly took his hand, speaking in a low tone. "If they have put you out, and me in, Fred, believe me, it is no fault of mine. I never should have sought to raise myself on your downfall. You will hear more from Mr. Lyvett and James."

Frederick Lyvett went upstairs, and opened the door of his father's private room. The latter waved him away, for a client was sitting there in eager converse. He next looked for his brother James. Mr. James Lyvett was not in. He then went down to the old confidential clerk, Mr. Rowley.

"Rowley, what is all this, that's up? Jones has possession of my desk, and says it is by my father's orders."

"Oh, Mr. Frederick, I am as much grieved as if you were my own son," was the old clerk's answer. "I did try to say a word for you to Mr. Lyvett, but he would not hear me. Perhaps time may make things right. I hope and trust it will. You have not seen him?"

"No. Sir Charles Dalrymple is there."

"Sir Charles will not stay long. I know what he wants to-day. Mr. Frederick, I must say a word of counsel to you. It will not be the first I have said, you know."

"Not by a good many," laughed Frederick.

"Your father is very much put out. This has been the worst blow he has ever had. He feels it for you, not for himself——"

"Then he has no cause to feel it for me," interrupted Frederick, "for the step I have taken has assured my happiness." But Mr. Rowley held up his finger for silence.

"I would ask you to be prepared for any ebullition of anger, and to bear it without retort," he continued to say. "In his vexation, he may speak hasty words; but don't you retaliate, Mr. Fred, for that would only make matters worse. When his anger has had time to calm down, say in a few months, he may set things again on the old footing for you."

"But Jones is in."

"There's room for you and for him too. The business is large enough. I fancy they always intended to give Jones a small share. See your father, Mr. Fred, and be submissive to him. If —— There goes somebody. Wells!"

"Yes, sir."

"Is that Sir Charles Dalrymple who has gone out?"

"Yes, it is, sir."

"Now's your time, Mr. Frederick, before anybody else comes in," resumed old Rowley, in a whisper.

Away tore Frederick up the stairs, a flight at a time, anxious to "stand the firing and get it over."

The "firing" was not that anticipated. Mr. Lyvett said little, and that little calmly: it was apparent that his feeling of anger had merged itself into the deeper one of sorrow. He quietly explained to his son that after the marriage he had made—had persisted in making, in express defiance of his mother's wishes and his own commands—he could no longer remain a member of the high-standing firm of Lyvett, Castlerosse, and Lyvett: and that he, Mr. Lyvett, had exercised the power he held in his hands to dissolve the partnership, so far as his younger son was concerned. But he did not wish to be harsh, more so than the proprieties of the case demanded, Mr. Lyvett continued to say, and a certain sum of money (£6,000, being a portion of what Frederick would inherit hereafter) he had caused to be placed to Frederick's account at the banker's. The interest of this would supply household exigencies (the wife he had married could not require refinements or luxuries, not having been reared to them, he added, in a parenthesis), and he would recommend Frederick to commence practice on his own account.

Mr. Frederick Lyvett heard his father to an end, and then spoke. "My marriage," he said, "is an act that concerns only my private life. How can it affect my remaining, or not remaining, in the firm?"

"The person you have married is particularly objectionable to us, Frederick, and you were aware of this. As the daughter of the man and his wife who were our servants for many years in these offices—low, common people with nothing whatever to redeem them from their native sphere—it is impossible that we can ever associate with her. If they gave the girl an accomplished education, though at the best it must have been a superficial one, why, it only served to render her miserable and themselves ridiculous. There were other and more weighty objections to her, of which I informed you ——"

"They were not true: she disproved them all," eagerly interrupted Frederick.

"*They were true.* But she is now your wife, and I will not again allude to them. Your brother felt—I felt—your mother and sisters felt

—Mr. Castlerosse felt—that your giving your name to this person cast a slur upon yourself so great, as to render it inexpedient for you to remain a member of this firm; indeed, it could not be permitted. I can only say I hope you will do well, alone. We can no doubt put some odds and ends of practice into your hands, and we will do so."

Frederick Lyvett did not answer. He was reflecting on his father's words; revolving the prospect before him.

"Upon one point, Frederick," Mr. Lyvett went on, "we must have a thorough understanding. Upon no pretext seek to introduce her to the family; do not attempt it: it would be derogatory to your mother and sisters and to James's wife. Neither at present nor in future shall we ever submit to know her ——"

"Do you not think you are harsh, sir, in this?" interrupted the son.

"No. The fact is, Frederick, our feeling towards her is very, very sore. There's no doubt, though you may not see it—I hope, indeed, for your sake that you never may—but there is no doubt that she has shamelessly and cunningly played her cards to *draw you in*. While you have thought her all that she appears on the surface; guileless, innocent, inexperienced, generous; she has in reality been hard at work at her crafty game—entrapping you—and she has played it out. No, we can never consent to know her. Yourself we will receive. Come and see us whenever you please, your mother wishes it; remembering that your wife's name, and all allusion to her, is an interdicted topic. Come and dine with us to-morrow if you will. This evening we are going out to dinner."

"I will not promise to come," answered Frederick. "Of course, it would cause me great pain to be on estranged terms with you all, and especially with my mother. I think I am treated ill in this affair, but for my mother's sake I will not resent it?"

"My boy!" cried Mr. Lyvett, the agitation of his voice betraying that his wounds were sharp just then, "I trust that should children be born to you, they may never bring the grief to you that you have brought home to us."

Frederick Lyvett met the hand that was held out to him and clasped it warmly, gulping down the heartache that rose in his throat.

"This estrangement is very bitter, father. I am deeply sorry to have grieved you, but I did not think you would have taken it to heart like this."

"Until you shall be a father yourself, Frederick, and your children grown, you can never know what this trouble is."

"I shall live but in one hope now, father: that in time you may see cause to be reconciled to my wife, and esteem her. In time."

Frederick went downstairs; the old clerk was looking out for him.

"How have you sped, Mr. Frederick?"

"Sped? Well, not very well. My father has chosen to take it up

as—as I never thought he would. And that farce of turning me out! It is to stand."

Mr. Rowley shook his head. "I knew it was to, when they did it. Mr. Lyvett talks to me of most things. Was he very outrageous?"

"Cool and calm. The family don't want to break with me. He asked me to dinner to-morrow."

"That's better than I hoped for," was the hearty response. "Pray go. You will, won't you?"

"No, of course I shall not. A pretty compliment to my wife, that would be—to go home to dinner and leave her behind."

"It is all you can do. Conciliation is the chief step at present: much lies in that. *All* lies in it, for it paves the way for other steps later. You don't know the feuds that time and conciliation have reconciled. Go, Mr. Fred, go; take old Rowley's advice for once."

"I think I have taken it pretty often. I say, Rowley, just look about for what's mine. Here's the key of the private drawer in the desk Jones has usurped. Put all the things together, and I will send for them. There ought to be a few books of mine somewhere."

And thus Frederick Lyvett was turned out of his father's offices. It was the first unpleasant result of his marriage. If it had but been the last!

Calling a cab, he returned home, getting there at six o'clock. The dinner was ready to be served, and he hastily went to wash his hands. The bedroom and dressing-room looked in much disorder: things were half in, half out of the trunks, the floor was strewed. Fred Lyvett had the bump of order, and the sight jarred on that organ's sensitive nerves. He kissed his wife, so young and fair, and said something about her fatigue. She was in the dress she had worn on the journey: quite a noticeable event, for she was so fond of finery.

"Sophia!" he suddenly exclaimed, as they were beginning dinner, "are you ill?"

She was attempting to eat her fish, but her face had turned livid, and a fit of trembling seemed to have seized on her.

"It is only the fatigue of the journey," she said, her teeth chattering as she spoke. "And I exerted myself, unpacking."

"You should not have attempted to unpack to-day. I see you have been unable to put anything away."

"I felt ill," she murmured.

Frederick Lyvett rose and approached his wife. The very chair shook under her.

"Once or twice before—when I have been much fatigued—I have been attacked—like this," said Mrs. Lyvett, in disjointed sentences.

"Can I bring you anything up, ma'am?" inquired the maid who was in waiting. "Anything warm?" she added, looking on with compassion.

"Yes," cried Mr. Lyvett, hastily seizing on the suggestion, "bring some brandy-and-water.—Did the brandy and wine come, that I ordered in?"

"It is placed in your cellar, sir."

"Bring up a tumbler directly. Hot and strong. My dearest Sophia, what can this be?"

"I shall be better soon," she faintly answered.

Mrs. Lyvett drank the brandy-and-water and became better; but she refused her dinner, and leaned back in an arm-chair while Mr. Lyvett finished his. After the things had been removed, the servant again appeared at the door.

"Can I speak to you, for a moment, if you please, ma'am?"

"To me?" asked Mrs. Lyvett. She rose and approached the door, a nervous movement running through her frame.

The girl pulled the door to behind Mrs. Lyvett, before she spoke, but did not close it. "My mistress wished me to ask, ma'am, if we should make some bread-and-milk for the baby's supper."

"The—baby's—supper?" she stammered.

"Or is there anything else he would like better?'

Mrs. Lyvett made a sudden movement, which brought her back against the door-post. "What baby?" she asked. "What are you talking of?"

The maid looked surprised. "The little boy, ma'am, that the countrywoman brought here."

"The woman took the child away with her," gasped Mrs. Lyvett.

"Took it away—— Oh, then," added the girl, breaking off her sentence, "my mistress must have been mistaken. She thought it was left."

Frederick Lyvett had quick ears. "What was that consultation about a baby, Sophy?" he said, in a joking tone when his wife returned. "You might have told her we had not bought any babies yet."

Mrs. Lyvett strove to smile, but when her lips were drawn away from her teeth she could not get them back again. "People do make such stupid mistakes," she attempted to say, but at best it was but a low mutter. "A woman who—knew my mother—called here this afternoon—with her baby—and the servant thought she had not gone."

The excuse came to her lips on the moment's impulse. But it is probable that had poor Sophia Lyvett known where, in all the wide world of London her mother was that day to be found, the great tragedy of her life had never taken place. The words and the matter passed away from Fred Lyvett's mind. His wife threw herself into the easy-chair again, and he related to her the substance of what passed at the office, suppressing only the stern prohibition as to all *future* intercourse with herself. He strove to make light of it: just as though it were a farce. "They are on the corky system just now, Sophy," he concluded, "but they'll come down. Don't be disheartened."

She urged his acceptance of the following evening's invitation—urged it so strongly, in so agitated and eager a manner, that it turned the scale of his mind in favour of going. He had wished to go. Not only on the score of policy, as the old clerk urged, but that it would be terribly painful to himself to be estranged from his family.

"I would have liked to go," he honestly avowed, "but I don't like to leave you alone for a whole evening, Sophy. They dine at seven; I should not get home till ten, or later, for it won't do to run away the minute dinner's over. A disgraced child must be on its good behaviour."

Mrs. Lyvett only pressed it the more urgently. She should be happier alone, knowing he was there, than if he remained away for her gratification.

When they retired to rest, Mr. Lyvett saw that the clothes and packages had been put tolerably straight by the servants. In the middle of the night his wife was taken with a second fit of trembling, so violent that it woke him up in a fright.

(*To be continued.*)

AT EVENING-TIME IT SHALL BE LIGHT."

ALL day she wandered in the forest wide,
Where woven branches shut out heav'n's pure light:
She joyed in each fair sylvan sound and sight,
And plucked the flow'rs that grew on ev'ry side;
Nor heeded, in gay wantonness and pride,
Whether she took the path to left or right;
How she should fare when fell the shades of night;
Or where her course would end without a guide.
Evening drew near:—"Oh, for a clearer ray,"
She cried, and bowed her face upon her breast—
"To fall within these glades and show the way!
My feet are weary, and I long for rest."
A radiant vista meets her lifted eyes;
Sunset is burning in e western skies.

EMMA RHODES.

A. HOPKINS. J. SWAIN.

MIRIAM.

THE ARGOSY.

JUNE, 1875.

A SECRET OF THE SEA.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT."

CHAPTER XVI.

FASCINATION.

A FEW days after the private interview between Mr. Van Duren and his lodger, Mr. Billing, the lawyer, called on Mr. Byrne by appointment, and took down that gentleman's instructions with respect to the disposition of his property. Three days later, Mr. Billing called with the all-important document, and found waiting to receive him in Mr. Byrne's parlour, the testator himself, Mr. Van Duren, who had most kindly consented to act as one of the executors, and a certain Mr. Dexter, an old personal friend of Mr. Byrne, who was to act as executor number two.

Then, at the testator's request, the will was read aloud by Mr. Billing. By its provisions Mr. Byrne bequeathed, equally between his son Gerald and his daughter Miriam, the whole of his property, amounting in the aggregate to thirty thousand pounds, the same being partly invested in government three per cents., and partly in the shares of certain railways and other public companies. When the reading was over, Mr. Byrne put his signature to the will in a hand that was remarkably firm and clear for his age. The two executors then appended their signatures. Mr. Billing took charge of the document, and the ceremony was at an end. After that, a couple of bottles of old port were produced, the testator's health was drunk, then there was a little hand-shaking and the expression of many good wishes, and after that the three gentlemen went away, and Mr. Byrne was left to solitude and his own thoughts.

His own thoughts, such as they might be, seemed of an eminently satisfactory nature. Miriam was out—had been sent out purposely during the process of will-signing. Thus it fell out that Mr. Byrne now found himself temporarily deprived of the services of his daughter.

But that did not trouble him in the least. He liked to be waited upon —as most men do—but he was not above looking after his own comforts when there was no one else to do it for him. All through life he had been in the habit of celebrating any pleasant little event, or successful stroke of business, by taking something "on the strength of it," as he termed it; and it was hardly likely that he should pretermit such an excellent observance on the present occasion. Accordingly, he no sooner found himself alone than he proceeded to charge and light the inevitable pipe, and to mix for himself the inevitable tumbler of grog. With his chair tilted back on its hind legs, his feet on the table, his wig awry, his pipe in his mouth, and his steaming glass before him, Mr. Byrne was quietly meditating over the day's proceedings, when, without any preliminary knock, the door that gave egress on to the landing was quietly opened, and the head of Pringle, Mr. Van Duren's clerk, was thrust into the room. His glassy eyes fixed themselves on Byrne, but without any apparent sign of intelligence lighting up their dull depths. For a few seconds the two men stared at each other without speaking. Byrne was, in fact, too much taken aback to utter a word. "Beg pardon. I thought the governor was here," said Pringle at last. "See he isn't. Sorry to intrude." With that he withdrew his head and shut the door very softly.

"That drunken fool has seen enough to spoil everything!" cried Byrne, as he started to his feet. "What an ass I must have been not to lock the door! My only chance is that he may have had so much to drink as to have forgotten all about what he saw by to-morrow morning."

Pringle having shut the door of Mr. Byrne's room, stood still on the mat, while he indulged in one of his noiseless, malicious laughs. "I thought the old boy was after some private little game of his own," he said; "and I thought I shouldn't be long before I spotted him. A disguise—eh? And no more deaf, I'll swear, than I am! Haven't I listened at the keyhole, and heard him and the girl talking quite natural and easylike? And then Van Duren's sweet on the girl, but the girl looks too wide awake to be sweet on him, without she thinks him rich and wants a husband. I can't make out just yet what it all means, but, anyhow, I don't think it means much good to Van Duren; and so long as it don't mean any good to him I sha'n't interfere. I'll watch and say nothing, and if I only find that the pair of them are weaving a net round Van Duren, won't I give them a helping hand! That is," he added, as if suddenly correcting himself, "that is, provided it don't interfere with my own little game."

He went slowly downstairs to the office on the ground-floor. The gas was lighted, but there was no one in the room. "Van Duren and Billing have gone out together. If Van thinks I'm going to wait for him, he's mistaken. I'll just shut up shop, and go to tea. Now, what

could Van and the other one want in the old boy's room upstairs? That's a puzzler. Is there some little game on that they are all mixed up in? Or are Van and the other trying to best the old 'un? Or is the old 'un trying to best Van and the other one?" Shaking his head as though the questions he had put to himself were beyond his powers of solution, he took a ledger under each arm and carried them slowly downstairs—all Pringle's movements were slow—into the fire-proof room in the basement of the house, where Van Duren's books and papers were habitually kept.

This fire-proof room was on the same floor as the rooms inhabited by Bakewell and his wife, who had charge of the whole premises, but was separated from them by a brick passage of some length. Opposite the foot of the stairs was a door that opened into this passage, in which a tiny jet of gas was kept burning through the day. At the end of the passage was a strong iron door, which opened into the fire-proof room. There was only one key to this door, and that was kept by Van Duren himself. But it was part of Bakewell's duties to go up to his master's bedroom every morning, obtain the key in question, open the door—which was allowed to stand open all day—lock it again at ten o'clock at night, and take back the key to his master's bedroom. When Van Duren went out of town, which he did frequently, the key was given in charge of Pringle. The key of the safe itself never left Van Duren's possession for more than a few minutes at a time. A small, square apartment, with a bricked roof, and fitted up with shelves and book-racks, with sundry boxes in one corner, and in the other a large patent safe: such was Mr. Van Duren's fire-proof room. Like the passage that led to it, it was entirely shut out from daylight, and the gas was kept burning in all day long.

When Pringle had deposited the ledgers in their proper places, he turned the gas a little higher, and then stood for a few moments listening intently. Not a sound broke the silence. "If one was buried six feet deep in the earth, one couldn't be quieter than one is here," said Pringle, with a shudder. "It's just like a vault, particularly when one knows that there's nothing but dead men's bones all round. No fear of an interruption," he added. "Bakewell's out, and his wife ain't over-fond of this part of the house."

His next proceeding was a very singular one. From an inner pocket of his waistcoat he extracted a key, which key he proceeded to insert into the lock of the patent safe in the corner. "Not quite the thing yet," he muttered, as he tried the key. "Wants another touch of the file here and there. Grainger's three thousand will fall due in about a month's time. I must have everything ready by then. It's sure not to be all in bills. There will be a fewhundreds in gold. Then there will be Van's private stock, and other things. Altogether, a pretty little haul."

He withdrew the key from the lock and put it back into his secret pocket. "If he had not treated me like a dog, if he had treated me as one man ought to treat another, I should never have thought of this thing. He thinks that he has me in his power, and that I dare not turn; but he will find himself mistaken. I'm not quite a worm, though he tramples on me as if I were. He will find that I can turn, and sting too, when the proper time comes."

He went back upstairs, turned down the gas in the office, and taking his hat and his faded gingham umbrella, left the house.

Jonas Pringle was from fifty to fifty-five years old. He was bald, except for a straggling fringe of hair round the back of his head, and had weak, watery eyes, that gave him the appearance, to strangers, of being habitually in tears. He always dressed in black, and always wore an old-fashioned tail-coat. But his black clothes were never otherwise than very shabby and threadbare, and shiny with old age at the elbows and knees. He wore a thick black-silk neckcloth, above which peered the frayed edge of a dirty collar. Among Pringle's intimates at the Pig and Whistle (his favourite evening haunt) there was a story current that he had not had a new hat for twenty years.

This evening he went mooning slowly along the streets, muttering under his breath, as was his habit, and glancing up with a queer, sudden stare into the face of every woman that passed him. Years before, he had lost his daughter, an only child: lost her, that is, in the sense of her being stolen from him by a villain. It was a fixed article of Pringle's belief that he should one day find his daughter again, and he had got into the habit, when walking along the streets, of looking into the face of each woman that he met, ever hoping that among them he might some time see again the face of his lost Jessie.

It was quite impossible for Pringle to get as far as his lodgings without making one or two calls for refreshment by the way. There were certain houses where his face was as well known as that of a regular frequenter, and where they knew, without his having to be at the trouble of asking for it, the particular article (twopennyworth of gin, neat) with which to supply him. "He's been at it again," remarked Pringle, parenthetically, to the landlord of one of the dirty little taverns which he favoured with his patronage. "He was raving about all morning like a bear with a sore head. Nothing pleased him, nothing one could do was right."

"Ay, ay. I shouldn't stand it if I was you," answered the publican.

"I sha'n't stand it much longer; you may take your oath of that," said Pringle. "There'll be a day of reckoning before long: mark my words, if there ain't."

About the very time that Jonas Pringle was giving utterance to this mysterious threat, the man to whom he referred was sitting alone,

thinking deeply—thinking of Miriam Byrne, of her manifold charms of fortune and person, and trying to screw up his courage to the point of asking her to become his wife. He had fully made up his mind that he would so ask her, but he wished with all his heart that the task were well over. In all business transactions he was one of the most prompt and decisive of men, and, it may be added, one of the hardest; but the thought of having to tell this dark-eyed beauty of twenty that he loved her and would fain marry her, fluttered his nerves strangely. That it must be done, and done soon, he had quite made up his mind; but none the less did the thought of having it to do trouble him. To old Byrne he had thrown out one or two hints already, and had not been repulsed. In fact, the old man seemed desirous of seeing his daughter comfortably settled in life, and would perhaps be more likely to encourage the addresses of a man like Van Duren, who knew the world and the value of money, rather than those of some empty-headed popinjay of Miriam's own age, who would, in all probability, first spend her fortune and then neglect her. Ah! if he could only win her for himself—win her and her fortune too—what a happy stroke of luck that would be! He admired the girl for her beauty, admired her more than any woman he had ever met before, and even if she had not been worth a penny, he might in some moment of rashness have flung all other considerations to the winds, and have asked her to marry him. But knowing what he knew about her, would he not have been an idiot to have let such a golden opportunity slip through his fingers without trying to grasp it and claim it for his own? "If I can find a chance of doing so, I'll propose to her to-morrow," he said to himself, emphatically, as he rose from the table. "I cannot afford to lose another day."

At seven o'clock next evening Mr. Van Duren knocked at the door of his lodgers' sitting-room. His summons was answered by Miriam in person. He started with surprise as his eyes fell on her. He had never seen her dressed as she was to-night. Anyone might have thought that she knew he was going to call upon her, that she suspected what he had made up his mind to say. Had she deliberately laid herself out to fascinate him, to enthral his senses, to make him forget reason and prudence and all the cautious rules with which his life had heretofore been hedged round, she could not, with all her thought, have done more towards effecting that end than the caprice of a moment was likely to do for her without thought at all. And it was but the whim of a moment that had induced her to attire herself after the fashion in which she presented herself to the eyes of Van Duren to-night.

She wore a long, trailing robe of amber silk, which fitted her very loosely, and was fastened round her waist with a gay Persian scarf of many colours. The sleeves of this dress were cut very short, and Miriam's bare arms were decorated with bracelets of tiny, tinted shells

and small coins intermixed. A fringe of coins was bound round her forehead, and fastened at the back with a gilt arrow. Her hair fell to her waist in two long plaits, with which more coins and shells were intermixed. As she walked across the room, and as she reclined on the sofa, the tips of two Turkish slippers, embroidered with gold thread and silks of various colours, could be seen peeping from under the edge of her robe. In her ears hung two tiny bells, that looked like gold, but were only gilt, which tinkled faintly when she moved her head; round her throat was clasped a double string of large amber beads.

"Good evening, Miss Byrne," said Van Duren, as soon as he recovered his presence of mind. "I have had a small consignment of fruit from France, and I have ventured to hope that you would do me the favour of accepting a box of it."

"You are kindness itself," said Miriam. "But don't stand there, please." Then, when she had shut the door behind him, she added: "How you have so quickly found out two of my pet weaknesses—flowers and candied fruits—is more than I can understand." Then she took the box from his hand. "Many, many thanks. Why, the casket itself is quite a work of art."

Van Duren crossed to where Mr. Byrne was sitting in his easy-chair by the fire. He had neither spoken nor stirred from the moment of hearing the knock at the door. Van Duren laid his hand on the old man's shoulder. "How are you this evening, Mr. Byrne?" he said, speaking close to the other one's ear.

"Oh, hearty, hearty: never better," answered Byrne, in a querulous voice. "If it wasn't for this nasty cough, and this pain in my side, and one or two other trifles, I should be as right as a trivet."

"We shall soon have the warm weather here now, and that will help you along."

"Of course it will. In another month's time I shall be out and about again, as strong and active as a young lion."

"Poor papa never will allow that he is worse," said Miriam, in a low voice. "He has certainly been weaker and feebler for the last day or two, but he will persist in saying that he is quite the opposite."

"The old boy can't last long," thought Van Duren to himself: "another reason why I ought not to delay."

Next minute, without hardly knowing how it happened, he found himself sitting opposite Miriam, who had resumed her favourite position—a half-sitting, half-reclining one—on the sofa, and was eating daintily a sugared apricot. How round and white her arms looked, contrasted against the deep amber of her robe, from under which the tiny Turkish slippers peeped tantalizingly! She was certainly very lovely, but about her loveliness to-night there was something wild and weird that at once attracted to itself a certain element of savagery that lay latent in the

character of her admirer, but which the quiet, humdrum life he had led of late years had all but buried out of sight. An Englishman of the timid conventional type would either have been repelled or frightened had he seen the lady of his love decked out after Miriam's strange fashion, but it only served to draw Van Duren more closely to her. It seemed to him that, could he but have had his own way in the matter, he would never have let her dress otherwise than as he saw her to-night. As he gazed at her, all the pulses of his being seemed to throb with newer life. His eyes brightened, the lines of his hard mouth softened, and for once, as Miriam avowed afterwards to her father, the man looked almost handsome.

Miriam's guitar was resting against the sofa, within reach of her hand. Said Van Duren: "You were singing and playing, the other evening, Miss Byrne, as I went upstairs to my own room, but I have never had the pleasure of hearing you when in your company."

"Then you ought to consider yourself very fortunate," replied Miriam, "for I am really not worth listening to."

"Will you give me an opportunity of judging for myself?"

"If you put it as a definite request, of course I cannot refuse you. I have accepted your bribe beforehand," she added, with a smile, pointing to the box of fruit.

"I should really like to hear you."

"Then you shall hear me. After that you will be satisfied. You will never want to hear me again."

"That's as it may be," said Van Duren, as he drew his chair a couple of inches nearer the sofa.

"What shall I murder for you?" asked Miriam, as she took up the guitar.

The phrase was an ugly one, and had been spoken without thought. Van Duren started as if some one had smitten him suddenly from behind. He shot a look full of suspicion and terror at Miriam, but her eyes were bent on the guitar, one or two strings of which seemed to want screwing up.

"What shall I sing for you?" she said, amending her phraseology this time.

Van Duren recovered himself with an effort. "The guitar has always been associated in my mind," he said, "with love-songs and serenades, with moonlight and romance."

"Then here's a little serenade for you. I, who sing, am supposed to be a cavalier. If your imagination will carry you so far, you can fancy yourself to be the lady thus lovingly addressed." She struck a chord or two on the guitar, and began as follows:

"What throbs through the song of the nightingale?
What makes the red heart of the rose turn pale?
Love, burning love.

What makes me grow drowsy 'neath midsummer skies?
What makes me a slave to my lady's dark eyes?
Love, burning love."

One verse will be quite enough for the reader. Miriam's voice was a rich, clear contralto, which she managed with considerable skill. Now and again as she sang, she shot a glance out of her dangerous black eyes at the rapt listener sitting opposite to her. Her father, in the easy-chair by the fire, gave no further sign of existence than by the troublesome cough which seized him every few minutes and shook him like a leaf.

As the last line thrilled from Miriam's lips, Van Duren sank down on one knee before her, and tried to seize her hand. With a little involuntary shudder, she drew it away from him. Then he grasped a fold of her dress and pressed it passionately to his lips. "Miriam! Miriam! do not repulse me, but listen to me!" he cried. "You who can give such passionate expression to the words of a mere love-song must have felt and known that I loved you from the first moment that I saw you. I cannot ask or expect that you should give me back such a love as I now offer you. But try to like me a little—consent to be my wife—and I will do all that lies in the power of mortal man to make you happy!"

"Oh, Mr. Van Duren, you do indeed surprise me!" was all Miriam said: but she was not surprised in the least.

"I am richer than the world gives me credit for being," pursued Van Duren. "I have led a quiet, saving life for years, but all that shall be changed if you will only become mine. I can afford to let my wife live as a lady ought to live—I can afford to ——"

"Oh, Mr. Van Duren, you must not talk in that way."

"I am quite aware," he pleaded, "that there is a very wide difference between your age and mine, but ——"

"That would make no difference in my feelings towards anyone for whom I really cared."

"If you would only try to care a little for me!"

"It all seems so strange, Mr. Van Duren."

"What is it that seems so strange, dearest?"

"Why, that a man like you, who has seen so much of the world, who must have seen and known so many ladies both in England and abroad, should really profess to care about a foolish, frivolous girl like me."

"You are neither foolish nor frivolous. Besides which, you are different from anyone whom I ever met before. More than all, you are my fate."

"Your fate, Mr. Van Duren!"

"Yes, the one woman out of all the wide world whom, uncounted ages ago, it was fated, or fore-ordained, that I should love."

"Now you are going further than I can follow you," said Miriam,

with a smile. "Perhaps, at the same time, it was fore-ordained that I should reject your suit."

"You do not know how terribly in earnest I am, or you would not laugh at me."

"Indeed, Mr. Van Duren, I am not laughing at you. But pray resume your seat."

"Not till you have told me the best or the worst. Not till you have given me some word of hope, or told me that I must never hope again."

"Mr. Van Duren," said Miriam, with more earnestness than she had yet used, "your offer has come upon me so suddenly that I know not what to say. I think you can hardly expect me to give you an answer to so serious a question without giving me time to consider what that answer must be. Not now, not to-night—can I answer you either one way or the other. Two or three days at the least I must claim, to think over all that you have said to me, and to discover, if it be possible for me to do so, what my feelings are in a matter that concerns my future welfare so closely."

"I can but bow to your decision," said Van Duren. "I hope I may accept it as a good augury that you have not rejected my suit at once and entirely; that you have deemed it worthy of being taken into consideration."

"Ah, Mr. Duren, I am afraid that you are not such a novice as you would wish to make out: I am afraid that you understand more of our sex and their ways than you would care to have known."

Then, as if to close the subject, she took up her guitar and began to play. A few moments later Van Duren took his leave.

"Very well managed, my dear," said Mr. Byrne, approvingly, wheeling round his chair as soon as the door was closed upon their visitor; "only neither of you seemed to think much about me in the matter."

"I suppose Mr. Van Duren thinks that if he can obtain my consent, yours will follow as a matter of course."

"He is welcome to think what he likes, so long as you succeed in getting out of him the particular information that I want. So far, all has gone off well. In three days' time you will accept him provisionally—accept him on trial, that is, for a month or six weeks before finally binding yourself to anything. In the course of that month you ought to be able to worm out of him the all-important secret, without which all that we have done up to the present time will be of no avail whatever."

"I understand perfectly what you want, papa, but I cannot tell you how utterly distasteful to me is the whole wretched business."

"Tut, tut, girl, you mustn't talk in that way! Think of the two hundred pounds that will be yours—absolutely your own—if we succeed."

"I do think of it, papa. But even that can hardly reconcile me at times to go through with what I have promised. You don't know the feeling of repulsion, of absolute loathing, that came over me to-night when that man tried to take my hand. Think what it is to be made love to by a murderer: think of this, and pity me!"

"Of course I pity you, and feel for you," said the old man, soothingly. "But our needs are great, and the money will be very useful—you can't but admit that."

"Oh yes, I admit that. But I was never afraid of poverty."

"I am not afraid of it—but I certainly don't like it. But what do you intend doing with your two hundred pounds, Miriam? Better let me invest it for you."

"If I succeed in getting the two hundred pounds—which at present is by no means certain—I shall ——"

"Yes: what?"

"I shall furnish a couple of rooms—furnish them very nicely, mind you—and marry James."

"You will!" gasped the old man.

"I shall, most certainly. It is the thought of that and nothing else that strengthens me to go through with this dreadful business. No meaner prize would tempt me."

She stooped and kissed her father lightly on the forehead, and then went quickly out of the room as if afraid that what she had said might provoke a discussion that would have been unpleasant to both of them.

CHAPTER XVII.

EASTER HOLIDAYS.

THE Easter holidays were here, and Sir Thomas Dudgeon and family had gone down to Stammars for a fortnight. The baronet was like a boy released for awhile from the tyranny of school. He had always loved the country, but never had it seemed so sweet and pleasant to him as it did now after he had been penned up for a couple of months in the great wilderness of London. He spent hours with Cozzard every day, and together the two men visited every nook and corner of the property, and renewed acquaintance with every horse, dog, and cow on the estate. Sir Thomas's speech on the Sugar Duties, being a maiden effort, had been listened to with kindly attention by the House, and had been commented on in favourable terms by one or two of the morning papers. Amplified and embellished with tropes and similes not found in the original, it had been printed, in extenso, in the *Pembridge Gazette*, and had formed the basis of a ponderous leader in the editor's best style. Sir Thomas began to feel as if he were a power

in the realm. Really, as he sometimes whispered to himself, his wife's estimate of his abilities might not be such an exaggerated one, after all. He had been complimented so often about his speech, that, insensibly to himself, he began to regard it as being altogether his own composition, and to forget or ignore Pomeroy's share in the transaction.

The ball at Stammars came off in due course, and was very successful. It added greatly to the popularity of Sir Thomas among his constituents. Husbands and fathers in Pembridge were as amenable to feminine influences as they are supposed to be elsewhere, and Lady Dudgeon judged rightly that all the ladies would work for her after she had hinted that a similar gathering would probably be held at Stammars every year during Sir Thomas's parliamentary career.

Lady Dudgeon's correspondence had got greatly into arrears during her two months in London. As soon as the ball was over she devoted a week to letter-writing. She had many things to write about, and she did not spare any of her numerous correspondents. She had much to say respecting the fashions and foibles of society in town, the drier details being plentifully garnished with gossip and anecdotes respecting mutual friends, or such notabilities of the day as her ladyship might have been brought into casual contact with in the course of a ten minutes' crush on an aristocratic staircase. But the ball and its eccentricities were not forgotten; and could certain of the Pembridge ladies have seen how mercilessly their "dear Lady Dudgeon" ridiculed them in her letters to her fine friends—their manners, their conversation, and their toilettes—they would never have forgiven her to the last day of their lives.

Captain Dayrell came down for the ball and stayed the remainder of the week at Stammars. Neither he nor Lady Dudgeon had given up the campaign as hopeless. It was part of the captain's creed that young ladies, especially in matters matrimonial, did not know their own minds for a week at a time. Because he had been refused in March, that was no reason why he should not be accepted in April or May. He had felt considerably annoyed when Lady Dudgeon had told him the result of her conversation with Miss Lloyd. He hinted to her pretty plainly that she had committed an egregious blunder in broaching the subject to Eleanor at all, instead of leaving him to fight his own battle with that somewhat obstinate young person. "A meddlesome old cat" was the term he applied to her in his own thoughts. To do her justice, however, her ladyship was laudably anxious to atone for her error; therefore was Captain Dayrell invited down to Stammars, where he would have the field entirely to himself: even Mr. Pomeroy would be out of the way, Sir Thomas having given that gentleman a week's release from his not very onerous duties.

"You will have to do your spiriting very gently, Captain Dayrell," said her ladyship. "Miss Lloyd's refusal was a very decisive one."

"So long as there is no prior attachment—and you assure me that there is not—I will not permit myself to despair," said Dayrell. "I tell your ladyship this in confidence. But if it could in any way be hinted to Miss Lloyd that I have accepted her decision as final, and while deeply hurt by her rejection of me, have no intention of troubling her further, I think my cause might be greatly benefited thereby."

"Pardon me, but I hardly see the force of your suggestion."

"My dear Lady Dudgeon, it is a characteristic of your sex to regard a rejected suitor with a certain amount of tendresse. They say to themselves, 'Here is something that might be mine if I would only hold out my hand to take it.' So long as it is there for the having, they don't care to accept it; but when they have reason to think that they are about to lose it they will sometimes make a snatch at it rather than let it go altogether—or perhaps I ought to say, rather than let it fall into the hands of another."

In this matter Captain Dayrell judged Eleanor by himself. He was twice as anxious to win her now that she had declined his attentions as he had been before. Not that he would ever have dreamed of asking Miss Lloyd to become his wife had she been other than the heiress she was. He knew too well what was due both to himself and to society.

The suggested hint was duly given to Eleanor. It made her intercourse with Captain Dayrell, during his stay at Stammars, more easy and pleasant than it might otherwise have been, but beyond that it had no effect whatever. When the captain went back to town he was not quite so sanguine of success as he had been a week previously; but being of a persevering disposition, and having no belief in the immutability of a woman's No, he was still very far from considering his case as hopeless.

Olive Deane had three days' leave of absence from her duties at Easter. She went by invitation to spend the time with her aunt and cousin at Pembridge. She had seen neither of them during the two months she had been at Lady Dudgeon's. Matthew Kelvin had once or twice sent his chief clerk to transact business with the baronet, but had never put in an appearance himself. Could it be that he dreaded the possibility of meeting Miss Lloyd? was the question Olive sometimes asked herself; but it was a question to which there was no likelihood of her ever obtaining an answer.

Olive's heart fluttered strangely as she knocked at the familiar door. Absence had in no wise weakened her love for her cousin. Watered with her secret tears, its roots seemed only to grow stronger and to cling more tightly round her heart. "Why should my life be made miserable for the love of this man?" she sometimes asked herself. "He cares nothing for me. He never will care anything for me!" But in other moods she would say: "He will learn to love me yet.

Such a love as mine must have a magnetism in it strong enough to draw to itself the object of its desires."

But how was it possible that her cousin could grow to love her when she was separated from him by weeks and months of absence? She must devise some scheme that would bring her under the same roof with him again: that was her only chance. Once let Miss Lloyd become engaged either to Mr. Pomeroy or Captain Dayrell—once let Matthew Kelvin realize the fact that, safe in the love of another man, Eleanor was for ever beyond his reach, and she—Olive—would not stop another day at Stammars. Some excuse she would find, some reason she would invent, which would make her once more an inmate of her cousin's house. Now, to-day, when she took her aunt's hand and kissed her, she peered anxiously into her face to read whatever signs might be written there. Was her health much worse than usual? Was there any prospect that before long this poor ailing creature might need her services as nurse? Surely—surely, she could not linger on in this way for ever! She wished no harm to her aunt, but one cannot always help one's thoughts. To-day, however, Mrs. Kelvin looked pretty much as she had looked for the last three or four years: neither better nor worse.

She received her niece very kindly. Matthew was out on business, so there was time for an hour's confidential talk before he came back. One of Mrs. Kelvin's first questions had reference to Mr. Pomeroy: was he comfortable, and did he suit Sir Thomas? Then she was interested in hearing Olive's account of the gay doings in London, and genuinely pleased to find that Lady Dudgeon and her niece agreed so well together.

After that the old lady began to talk about her son. There had been a change in him of late, and it troubled her. He was not bodily ill, she thought; but he seemed to have something on his mind. He was restless and irritable, and seemed to crave for company and excitement more than he had ever done before. When he was talking about one thing he always seemed to be thinking about another. "He has not read a line to me for I don't know how long," sighed the old lady. "I can see that his heart is not in it, and so I don't care to ask him."

Mr. Kelvin came in while they were still talking about him. His face brightened the moment he saw Olive, and her heart whispered to her, "He is glad to see me!" He shook hands with her, and patted her cheek as he might have done that of a child. "Your roses were always white ones, Olive," he said, "and London smoke has certainly done nothing to turn them into red ones."

Olive's anxious eyes were not long in verifying what Mrs. Kelvin had said about her son. He certainly looked more worn and anxious than she had ever seen him look before. He seemed to have grown five years older in a few weeks. "Will he tell me, I wonder, what has gone

amiss with him?" whispered Olive to herself. "Can his anxiety have anything to do with Eleanor Lloyd? or is it common business cares that are troubling his mind?"

From whatever cause Mr. Kelvin's anxiety might spring, he made an effort this evening to put it behind him, and partly succeeded in so doing. He assumed a cheerfulness if he felt it not, and his mother was only too ready to believe that it was genuine. It struck Olive, however, that she had never seen her cousin drink so much brandy-and-water as he did this evening, and then he would finish up with champagne, toasting Olive in one bumper and his mother in another. After that he went out for a stroll and a whiff in the quiet streets, and had not come back when the ladies retired for the night. "Your coming, dear, seems to have done Matthew good," said Mrs. Kelvin to Olive as she kissed her at her bedroom door. "I have not seen him so bright and cheerful for weeks as he has been to-night. But I daresay my company is a little dull for him at times, and the house would be all the brighter for him if you could be here always."

If she could be there always! How the words rang in Olive's ears when shut up in the solitude of her own room! She could not go to bed till she heard Matthew come in, so she put out the candle and drew up the blind, and sat gazing out at the chilly stars till she heard her cousin's footsteps on the stairs.

Mrs. Kelvin never came down to breakfast, a fact of which Olive was aware. She judged that if her cousin had anything particular to say to her he would say it when his mother was out of the way, so she took care to be down to breakfast betimes next morning. Kelvin was moody and distrait. After a little commonplace conversation he lapsed into a silence that seemed deeper than common, and one which Olive did not care to break.

"Do you see much of Miss Lloyd?" he said at last, with a suddenness that was almost startling.

"I see her nearly every day—generally at luncheon," said Olive, quite calmly. She had expected some such question.

"Is she well and happy?"

"Quite well, and as far as one person may judge of another, quite happy."

Silence again for a minute or two. When Kelvin next spoke, it was with his eyes turned away from Olive. "She is young, handsome, and presumably rich, consequently not short of suitors—eh?"

"I see so little of Miss Lloyd, except at breakfast or luncheon, that I am hardly in a position to answer your question. There is, however, one gentleman who visits at the house, and who seems to be looked upon with favourable eyes both by Lady Dudgeon and Miss Lloyd."

"Ah! And who may he be?"

"His name is Captain Dayrell. He is said to be cousin to Lord Rookborough."

"Good-looking, of course?"

"Not bad-looking, certainly." Silence again.

Olive Deane knew quite well that in speaking thus of Captain Dayrell to her cousin she was not confining herself to the narrow limits of the truth. She knew quite well—for she was not blind, like Lady Dudgeon—that if the attentions of one man were more pleasant to Miss Lloyd than those of another, that man was John Pomeroy. But instinct warned her that it would not be wise on her part to mention Pomeroy's name in any such relation. That Miss Lloyd should receive the attentions of a man like Captain Dayrell would seem to her cousin no more than natural under the circumstances; but that Miss Lloyd should encourage the attentions of a penniless adventurer like Jack Pomeroy would have seemed an altogether different affair. Matthew Kelvin's pride would have revolted at the thought of Pomeroy winning that which he himself had failed to gain. He was just the man to have warned Sir Thomas, and have got Pomeroy discharged, so that the affair might be broken off; but in the case of Captain Dayrell no such mode of procedure was possible. However distasteful such a state of affairs might be to him, he could only submit to it with such grace as there might be in him.

It was characteristic of Olive Deane's crooked method of reasoning, that she fully believed that should her plot result in a marriage between Eleanor and Pomeroy, her cousin would, in time to come, be far better pleased than if no such scheme had been hatched by her busy brain. Would not Matthew Kelvin's revenge be far sweeter to him if the woman who had rejected him so contemptuously should marry an adventurer like Pomeroy, who could have no other object than her supposed wealth in trying to win her for his wife, rather than that she should become the promised bride of Captain Dayrell, who, though he should be told Miss Lloyd's real history at the last moment, might still be chivalrous enough to make her his wife? In any case, thus it was that Olive reasoned with herself, and for this reason it was that John Pomeroy's name was never mentioned by her in connection with Miss Lloyd.

"That was a devilish scheme of revenge that you suggested to me one morning in my office! I have had no peace of mind since I agreed to it."

"You talk as a woman might talk. I certainly gave you credit for more strength of purpose," said Olive, with the slightest possible touch of contempt in her voice.

"Strength of purpose has nothing to do with the point in question," he said, harshly. "For the first time in my life, I have wilfully tarnished my professional honour, and that is what annoys me so greatly."

"A few weeks more, and the necessity for concealment will be at an end. Captain Dayrell will propose to Miss Lloyd—will win her consent to become his wife. After that you can strike your blow as soon as you like."

Kelvin did not answer, but sat staring moodily into the fire. Olive regarded him furtively for a little while, without speaking.

"I certainly thought that I should have seen you at Stammars on the evening of the ball," she said, after a time.

"I had an invitation, but I did not choose to go. Too much of a tag-rag-and-bob-tail affair for me."

"Your absence was commented upon both by Sir Thomas and Lady Dudgeon at breakfast next morning."

"What does that matter to me?"

"Shall I tell you something else?"

"Just as you please."

"After Sir Thomas and Lady Dudgeon had left the room, I rose from the table and went and sat down for a few minutes in one of the deep window recesses. Miss Lloyd and Captain Dayrell rose too, and went towards the fire-place. I suppose from what followed that Miss Lloyd had forgotten that I was in the room. Said the captain to her: 'Who is this Mr. Kelvin, whose absence from the ball Sir Thomas seemed to regret so much?'—'Oh, a mere nobody—a provincial attorney,' answered Miss Lloyd."

"She said that, did she?" muttered Kelvin.

"'Oh, by-the-by,' continued the captain, 'I want to consult a lawyer on a point of business while I'm down here, and I daresay this fellow of Sir Thomas's would do as well as anybody else.'—'Yes, I should rather like you to see him, Frank,' said Miss Lloyd.—'Why him in particular?' asked the captain.—'Because this very man—this country attorney—actually had the audacity, no very long time ago, to ask me to become his wife!'—'Like his impudence,' said the captain, and then they both laughed, and left the room."

A deep flush mounted to the face of Matthew Kelvin. He got up from the table, and went and rested his two elbows on the chimney-piece, and stood gazing into the fire without speaking. The lie just told by Olive, but which he had accepted as truth, had evidently touched him to the quick. Olive, playing with her tea-spoon, watched him narrowly.

"Do you think of telling Miss Lloyd before long that she is not Miss Lloyd?" Olive ventured at last to remark.

"No, not yet—not yet!" answered Kelvin. "Now that I have kept the secret so long, it shall not be told till the eve of her marriage with this man. I leave it for you to let me know when the proper time has come. Let her suffer—as she has made me suffer."

With that he left the room. Nor, during Olive's visit, was the subject again alluded to between them.

All too soon, to Olive's thinking, did her visit come to an end. "You must steal another holiday before long," said her aunt to her as she was putting on her bonnet on the morning of her return to

Stammars. "Matthew has brightened up wonderfully while you have been here, and I can't tell you how thankful I am for it." Matthew himself kissed her as he handed her into the fly that was to take her back. He had not kissed her since that never-to-be-forgotten day at Redcar, now long years ago. How strangely her heart thrilled to the touch of his lips! "Oh! that I could be with him altogether, never to leave him more!" she murmured. She lay back in the fly and cried all the way to Stammars; but already in that crooked brain of hers the embryo of a strange, dark scheme was beginning to take shape and consistency, although as yet she herself was hardly aware of its existence.

Gerald, too, had his holiday at Easter. Not that he wanted it, or even asked for it. To know that he was under the same roof with Eleanor, even though his chances of seeing her might have been few and far between, would have been holiday enough for him. But Sir Thomas's offer was made in such a way that he could not refuse to accept it. He had no suspicion that the prime mover in the affair was Lady Dudgeon, who thought by isolating Eleanor as much as possible, she was materially increasing Captain Dayrell's chances of success.

The demon of Jealousy was tugging at Gerald's heart-strings as he left Stammars for London, and all by reason of this same captain Dayrell. He knew perfectly well that that gentleman, and he alone, had been specially invited to Stammars. He had met the captain once or twice at luncheon, and had seen enough for him to know that he might prove a most formidable rival. Before leaving Stammars he would fain have seen Eleanor, would fain have given her some hint more pointed than any he had yet given as to the state of his feelings, and have tried to win from her some sort of promise in return. But either through accident or by design, he found himself unable to see her even for five minutes; and he was compelled to go away without one word of farewell, but with the bitter knowledge—and bitter indeed it was to him—that his rival was expected to reach Stammars that very day in time for dinner.

"What may not such a man accomplish in ten days!" muttered poor Gerald to himself as he was being borne Londonwards in the train. "On the one hand, a good-looking, polished man of the world—a roué, doubtless, but how is Eleanor to know that?—full of bright talk and ready wit, and with an adaptability about him that makes him seem at home anywhere: on the other hand, an ardent, impressionable girl, bred in the country, lacking in knowledge of the world and its ways, with a sort of high-flown sentiment about her which Dayrell would know at once how to twist to his own advantage. In an encounter such as this, which of the two is likely to come off victor?"

Of a truth, poor Gerald was very miserable. He did not know, as we know, that he had himself supplied Eleanor with a suit of invisible

armour, welded by Love's deft fingers, which would have rendered her proof against the assaults of a hundred Captain Dayrells. He blamed himself in that he had not yet told her of his love—told her by word of mouth—not dreaming that he had already told it in divers other ways, with a silent eloquence which is often more persuasive and powerful than any words.

Gerald spent three days in London with Miss Bellamy and Ambrose Murray. Then he ran over to Paris with a view of seeking a little distraction among his old acquaintances in that gay city. But nothing could distract him for long at a time from his own jaundiced thoughts. The image of Captain Dayrell was a nightmare to him during the hours of darkness, and as a black shadow that never ceased to haunt his footsteps by day. His light-hearted Parisian friends told him that he was one of them no longer, that English fog had so permeated his system that there was no longer any esprit left in him: he was triste and distrait, and, in a much shorter time than he had intended, he returned to England.

Gerald's first question to the servant who opened the door to him was: "Is Captain Dayrell still here?"

"No, sir, he went back to town two days ago; and master and missis and the young ladies are gone to a juvenile-party, and won't be back till late."

"Miss Lloyd and Miss Deane, are they both at home?"

"Yes, sir. Miss Deane came back four days since. Miss Lloyd was to have gone with her ladyship to the party, but had a headache."

After eating a little dinner hurriedly, Gerald went in search of Eleanor. Unless her headache had compelled her to remain upstairs, he thought that he should probably find her in the back drawing-room. And there, in fact, he did find her. Her headache was better, and she had been playing a capriccio by Schubert. When Gerald opened the door she was still at the piano, sitting with downcast eyes and a finger pressed to her lips—thinking. The noise of the opening door broke her reverie. There was a start of surprise and a sudden blush when she saw who it was that came into the room. She rose from her chair, advanced a step or two, held out both her hands, and said: "I am so glad you are come back again!" As Gerald took her hands for a moment in his, he saw that there was a tear trembling in each corner of her eyes, blue as the skies on an April morning. He saw, too, or thought he saw, behind those tears, Love, that, suddenly surprised, had not had time to hide itself. All her being seemed to be suffused with an indescribable tenderness. The black thoughts that had coiled themselves round Gerald's heart from the hour of his leaving Stammars till the time of his return—his jealousy of Dayrell—his doubts as to whether Eleanor really cared for him—all vanished in this moment of supreme joy, like mists before the rising sun. It was impossible that

he should doubt any longer. An impulse that was uncontrollable, that swept away the flood-gates of thought and reason, came over him. He was still holding her hands and gazing into her eyes. He drew her to him—close to him. He wrapped his arms round her and pressed her to his bosom, her face upturned to his. He bent his head, and touched with his lips the blossom of hers. "Oh, my darling! if I could but tell you how much I love you!" he murmured in her ear. "If I could but tell you how happy it makes me to see you again!"

Her face was rosy red, but the moment he had kissed her, the violet of her eyes seemed to darken, and a strange, fathomless look came into them, such as he had never seen before. Then the tears fell, and for one brief, happy moment—while the second-hand of a clock might have marked six—she let her head rest where he had put it. Suddenly the great hall bell clanged loudly. The family had come back. Eleanor started, as the fawn starts from the covert when it hears the hunter's horn. For a single instant her eyes met Gerald's. An instant later he was in the room alone.

He stood for a little while like a man suddenly roused from sleep, who hardly knows where he is, or what has befallen him. "Was it my darling herself that rested in my arms, and whose lips I kissed just now?" he said. "Or have I suddenly lost my wits and only imagined it all? No! It must be true—it shall be true! At last she is mine—mine for ever!" Then, like one who feels himself to be still half asleep, he walked out of the room and shut the door behind him.

Hardly had the door closed, when Olive Deane stepped from her hiding-place behind the curtains of one of the windows, from which spot she had been an unseen witness of the foregoing scene. Her pupils were away, and she had nothing to do. She had gone into the back drawing-room at dusk, before the lamps were lighted, and had sat down on the cushioned seat that ran round the inner side of the large bow window. Presently, a servant came in to light the lamps, but went away again without perceiving Olive. Sitting there, behind the partially-drawn curtains, she was, as it were, in a tiny room of her own; and there she might probably have remained the whole evening without being discovered, had she chosen to do so. In fact, when Eleanor came in a little later, and sat down at the piano and began to play, Olive neither spoke nor stirred, but sat watching her rival with jealous, hungry eyes, and made no sign. Thus it fell out that she became an uninvited witness of the scene between Eleanor and Gerald.

There was a look of triumph on Olive's pale face as she stepped out of her hiding-place. In her black eyes there was an unwonted sparkle. "Checkmate at last!" she said. "Before long, I shall be able to tell Matthew that the hour of his vengeance has come. What will he say when he knows that the accepted lover of dainty Miss Lloyd is no gentleman, such as Captain Dayrell, but a beggarly adventurer, without

money enough to pay for the clothes he wears? Surely his revenge will be twice as sweet as it would otherwise have been! As for her—one short hour will strip her of name, wealth, position, and of the man to whom she has given her hand—for Pomeroy is not the man I take him to be if he do not cast her off the moment her real story is told him. Fine feathers make fine birds, Miss Eleanor Lloyd. We shall see how you will look when you are stripped of yours. Before three months are over, you will be grateful to anyone who will obtain for you a situation at forty pounds a year."

CHAPTER XVIII.

A SECRET OF THE SEA.

MR. BYRNE had been in the habit of writing a line to Ambrose Murray every few days, in order to satisfy the latter as to how matters were progressing at the house in Spur Alley. In one of his brief notes he mentioned that Van Duren had left home on business for a couple of days. Gerald Warburton happened to be at Miss Bellamy's when this note came to hand, and Murray at once proposed that he and Gerald should visit Byrne and his daughter in Spur Alley, while Van Duren was out of town. Gerald assented, and at six o'clock that evening, they found themselves at Van Duren's door. Mrs. Bakewell, as she ushered them upstairs, informed them that Miss Byrne had gone out almost an hour previously, but that the old gentleman would no doubt be very glad to see them.

There was no answer to the woman's knock at Mr. Byrne's door. "Poor old gentleman, he gets weaker and deafer every day," she said. "He's not long for this world, I'm afraid." Then she opened the door, and went into the room. Mr. Byrne was sitting, as he seemed ever to sit, in his great easy-chair in front of the fire. Mrs. Bakewell touched him on the shoulder, and shouted in his ear: "Two gentlemen to see you, sir."

"Ech, ech! two gentlemen to see me? Tell 'em to come in: tell 'em to come in. And shut that door as soon as you can. That draught's enough to cut one in two," and with that he turned feebly round and confronted his visitors. And then his cough began to trouble him, and he could not find a word to say till Mrs. Bakewell had gone out and shut the door behind her.

A moment later he was on his feet and grasping his visitors warmly by the hand. "Welcome to Spur Alley, gentlemen!" he said. "You could not have come at a more opportune time, except in one respect—that my daughter is not here to receive you as well as I. But the kettle is on the hob, and I've a bottle of prime Kinahan in the cupboard, together with a few choice Henry Clays, that were sent me

by a friend the other day. If you please, we will make ourselves as comfortable as present circumstances will admit of."

After a little coversation of no particular moment, said Byrne: "I am glad that you have come to see me, Mr. Murray. Had you not come here, I should have made a point of calling upon you in the course of a few days."

"Have you something of importance to communicate?"

"No, it is not exactly that; but I think the time has come for me to tell you what I have done already, and what I hope to accomplish before I am many days older; together with my reasons for going about this matter in the way I have gone about it."

"I shall be very glad to hear anything you may have to say, Mr. Byrne; but if you would rather defer this revelation for a little while longer, pray do so. As I have told you already, I have every confidence in your management of the affair, and shall continue to have, whether you choose to-day to tell me anything or nothing."

"You are very kind, Mr. Murray, but I think that I shall feel more comfortable if I tell you everything. I want either your approval or your disapproval of what I am doing: I want to feel the ground firm under my feet."

"In that case I have nothing more to say. You know what an intense interest the matter has for me in all its bearings, great or small."

"Before beginning what I have to tell you," said Byrne, "it may be just as well to lock the door. It was only the other day that Pringle, Van Duren's clerk, opened the door suddenly and put his head into the room. I felt sure at the time that he had either seen or suspected something, and would tell his master. I suppose I was mistaken, but for all that I don't run the same risk again."

Having locked the door, Mr. Byrne proceeded to light a cigar, and then to brew himself a tumbler of grog with all the care and deliberation to which so important a proceeding was entitled at his hands. Gerald joined him over a cigar. Murray never smoked.

"When you first came to me, Mr. Warburton, and spoke to me about this business," began Byrne after a few preliminary puffs, "I was more surprised than I cared to let you see. And when you told me what it was that you wanted me to do, I was still more surprised. And well I might be, as you will hear presently. You came to me, Mr. Warburton, in the first place, because you thought there might be a faint possibility of my being able to assist you to discover the whereabouts of Max Jacoby. I was able to assist you in a way that you little dreamt of. My brother, who is two years older than I am, was originally a sergeant in the detective police. He retired some years ago, and he now keeps a little country tavern in the neighbourhood of Dorking. I told my brother what I wanted; he gave me a note to a particular

friend of his who is still in the force, and it was through the kindness of this latter gentleman that I was enabled to inform you that our friend Mr. Max lived here, under this very roof, in Spur Alley. Having obtained that information for you, I naturally concluded that my task was at an end; but when you told me what further you wanted from me, that opened up an entirely fresh phase of the question."

Here Mr. Byrne paused to stir his grog and refresh himself with a hearty drink.

"The point urged by both of you," resumed Byrne, "was your belief that Max Jacoby was the murderer of Paul Stilling; and the question you put before me was: By what means is it possible to bring the guilt home to him? Gentlemen, what method of procedure I might have adopted under different circumstances in order to find an answer to your question I cannot of course say, but the one which I did adopt had its origin in a very peculiar occurrence, which I will presently explain to you. My plan was this: to take lodgings in this house—I and my daughter. To make the acquaintance of Van Duren. To invite him to tea or supper, in order that he might have an opportunity of associating with Miriam, who, on her part, was to do her best to fascinate him—to make him fall in love with her, and, if possible, to propose to her. Of this scheme Miriam was the hinge. Everything depended upon her—upon her good looks and powers of fascination. But knowing the sort of man I had to deal with, I determined to smooth for him still further the road I wanted him to travel. With this end in view, I led Van Duren on to the belief that I was rich, and I caused to be drawn up in due form a fictitious will, by which I bequeathed fifteen thousand pounds to my daughter, and of which I made Van Duren himself one of the executors. The bait took as I expected it would take. Van Duren, smitten already by my daughter's good looks, was conquered entirely when he found that she was also an heiress. A few evenings ago he fell on his knees before her and implored her to marry him. Miriam, by my instructions, accepted him conditionally: he is to be a month on probation, and if at the end of that time she finds that she can like him sufficiently well, she is to accept him as her future husband. But before the month of probation shall have come to an end, the particular object which has necessitated all this scheming and preparation will, I trust, have been accomplished."

Mr. Byrne had allowed his cigar to go out while talking. He now proceeded to relight it. This done, he again paid his respects to the grog.

Both Ambrose Murray and Gerald were utterly puzzled. That Byrne should have allowed, and, by his own confession, encouraged, Van Duren to make love and propose to his daughter, was to them an altogether incomprehensible proceeding. They awaited his further revelations with impatience.

You have certainly succeeded in exciting our curiosity, Mr. Byrne," said Gerald, "and I hope you won't send us away till you have thoroughly satisfied it."

"Never fear, sir. You shall have the whole history before you leave the room. With your permission we will retrace our steps a little. I have already told you that I have a brother who was formerly a sergeant in the detective force. He held this position at the same time that I was confidential clerk to Mr. Frodsham. As you are both aware, I happened to be in court on the very day that you, Mr. Murray, were tried for the murder of Paul Stilling. One of the chief witnesses at the trial was our friend, Mr. Max Jacoby. After my return to London I called one evening to smoke a pipe with my brother, and in the course of conversation the Tewkesbury murder case cropped up. I told Dick, who likes to hear of such matters, all about the trial. Jacoby's name was mentioned, and I remember remarking to my brother that he had far more the look of a murderer than the man in the dock—meaning you, sir. Well, gentlemen, some three or four months passed away, when, one day, I met my brother casually in the street. Says he to me: 'Peter, when next you come up to my crib I can show you a bit of paper that may perhaps interest you a little—a bit of paper with some writing on it, I mean.'—'Is the writing by anybody that I know?' said I. —'It's a letter,' said he, 'and the signature to it is "Max Jacoby"—the name of the fellow, isn't it, who was a witness in the Tewkesbury murder case?'—'That's the name, sure enough,' replied I. 'But how did a letter signed by him come into your possession?'—'Oh, the fellow to whom it was addressed got into a little difficulty. I had to search his rooms, and I found this letter among a lot of other papers. I took a copy of it before handing over the original, as I thought it might interest you.' Well, gentlemen, I thought very little more of the matter, as, indeed, why should I? Dick, however, did not forget, and the next time I called on him he produced the letter. I read the letter, and looked upon the affair as one of those curious coincidences which so frequently happen in real life; but I speedily forgot all about it, and the chances are that I should never have thought about it again had not your visit to me brought all the old circumstances back to my mind. After that visit I made it my first business to go down to Dorking and see my brother. The question was, had he, after all these years, got the copy of Jacoby's letter still by him? Fortunately for us, Dick is one of those cautious souls who hardly ever destroy anything, and who have an almost superstitious reverence for any scrap of paper with writing on it. In short, gentlemen, the letter was there. Dick gave it up to me without difficulty, and it is in my writing-desk at the present moment. Before reading the letter to you, I may just add that, having regard to my brother's great experience, I have taken the liberty of consulting him at each step of this affair. It is some pleasure

to me to be able to say that he takes the same view of the contents of the letter that I take, and that he agrees with all I have done up to the present time."

"You were quite right in consulting your brother, Mr. Byrne," said Murray. "It only proves still more clearly how thoroughly you have identified yourself with the case."

Byrne crossed the room, unlocked his writing-desk, and came back with the letter in his hand. "The letter bears no date," said he, "but as it was found by my brother in the lodgings of the man to whom it was addressed only some three or four months after the murder—subsequent to which occurrence it was, in my opinion, written—the exact date is a matter of very minor consequence. The address given is simply, 'My old lodgings,' and as it was found without an envelope, there is no clue to the post-mark. But that, too, is a matter of little consequence. And now you shall hear what it says." Mr. Byrne threw the end of his cigar into the fire, cleared his throat, and opening the yellow, time-worn paper, read as under:—

"MY DEAR LEGROS,—You will be surprised to hear from me so quickly after our last farewell, and to see the place from which this letter is written. Yes, I am back once more in the old spot—penniless—a beggar! I have met with a most terrible misfortune. I have been shipwrecked, and everything I had in the world has gone to the bottom. When I say *everything*, you know what I mean. I mean that which cost me so dear—that which I ran so terrible a risk for—that for which one man's life, and another man's happiness, were sacrificed. But the curse of blood rested on it, and it has gone. You remember that when you parted from me on board ship I had every prospect of a fair voyage, but during the night the wind began to rise, and by daylight next morning a terrific gale was blowing. We were still in sight of land, and having sprung a leak, we put back towards a little harbour with which our captain was acquainted. But before we could reach it, the ship struck on a sunken rock, and then it was every man for himself. We saved our bare lives, and that was all. I tried all I could to bribe the men to take my box with them in the boat, but it was of no avail. 'Life's sweeter than all the gold in the world,' they said. 'Your box may go to the devil, and we'll send you after it if we have any of your nonsense.' There was no use in my going abroad when I had lost the only inducement which would have taken me there. So here I am once more, the world all before me. I have just enough money left to buy me to-morrow's dinner. After that —— ? But I need not say more. I trust to you, my dear Legros, to send me a five-pound note by return. In fact, I must have it. I know too much of you, and you know too much of me, for either of us to decline these sweet little offices of friendship for the other.—Thine,

"MAX JACOBY."

The three men looked at each other in silence as Byrne slowly refolded the letter.

"Your familiarity with the contents of this letter," said Gerald at last, "has enabled you to arrive at certain conclusions in your own mind such as we, to whom the letter comes as an utter surprise, can no more than barely guess at. Do you mind telling us what these conclusions are?"

"The conclusions I have come to are very few and very simple," said Byrne; "simple, inasmuch as, to my mind, knowing what I know, they are plainly discoverable through the thin veil of obscurity in which the contents of the letter are purposely involved. My conclusions are these: That this letter was written within a very short time after the murder and subsequent trial. That the property whose loss Jacoby bewails in such bitter terms was neither more nor less than the proceeds of the murder, with which he was going abroad. That when the ship went to the bottom, Jacoby's ill-gotten gains went with her, and that Jacoby himself, having no longer the means of going abroad, came back to London in a state of utter destitution, as is evidenced by his begging the loan of a five-pound note from his quondam friend."

"Yes," said Gerald, after a few minutes of silent thought, "I quite agree with you that the construction which you have put upon the contents of this letter is a most feasible one, and I am inclined to think that it is also the true one. But even granting that such be the case, I confess I am still at a loss to understand in what way a proposal of marriage from Jacoby to your daughter can forward by one single step the special end we have in view—to bring home the crime to the real murderer."

"That, too, is where I am puzzled," said Murray; "for singular as this letter is, and confirmatory as it is of the belief I have all along maintained, that Jacoby is the guilty man, I altogether fail to see in what way Mr. Byrne's late proceedings tend to fix the guilt upon him."

Byrne, looking from one to the other, rubbed his hands and chuckled. "I thought that part of the business would be a stumbling-block," he said. "But if you will allow me, I can lift you over it very easily. You will have observed that Jacoby's letter enters into no particulars. It gives neither the name of the ship, the date of sailing, nor the port he sailed from. We cannot advance a step beyond the letter till we make ourselves masters of that information. It is quite evident that there is only one source from which we can obtain it, and that is from Jacoby himself. How are we to get out of him any information respecting this, the great secret of his life? Were you or I to question him, we should merely arouse his suspicions and shut his lips for ever. Gentlemen, no one can worm the secret out of this man but a woman—and only a woman that he loves. Gentlemen, Max Jacoby loves my daughter, and has asked her to become his wife: on my

daughter devolves the duty of making this man reveal what he has probably never told yet to any living soul. And now you understand the point at which we have arrived."

"Clearly," said Gerald; "and upon my word, I am doubtful whether the same result could have been arrived at by means other than those which you have seen fit to make use of."

Ambrose Murray did not speak, but he put out his arm, and grasped Byrne by the hand in a fashion far more eloquent than words.

"If Mr. Byrne will allow me, I will proceed just one step further in the matter," said Gerald. "Assuming for a moment that we have succeeded in getting out of Jacoby all the information we want from him; that we know when and from where he sailed, and the name of the ship —what then? The only evidence on which it would be possible to convict him will still be at the bottom of the sea."

Before Byrne could say a word in reply there came a sudden knocking at the door, and the voice of Bakewell was heard outside. "A letter for Mr. Byrne."

Murray, his mind impressed with what had gone before, said solemnly: "Yes it will still be, what it must remain for ever—a 'Secret of the Sea!'"

Byrne held up a warning finger. In one minute he seemed to become twenty years older. He hobbled feebly towards the door, coughing meanwhile in a way that was pitiful to hear. "All right, Bakewell, I'm coming—I'm coming," he cried, querulously. Then, as he opened the door, Miriam's voice was heard carolling gaily as she ran quickly upstairs.

(*To be continued.*)

PHYLLIS AND CORYDON.

By Julia Kavanagh.

THE world was very full of handsome shepherds and lovely shepherdesses a hundred years ago. You found them in books, in pictures, in china—everywhere, indeed, except in fair pasture lands or on the slopes of grassy hills. Of the coarse beings who wore the skins of Alpine goats and the plaids of Scottish Highlanders; who tended sheep through snow or hailstorm; who thought more of a well-filled flask than of pastoral curds; the world took no account. They were made for toil and pains and wrinkles and old age; whereas Corydon and Phyllis, ever blooming, ever young, fulfilled their lot if they charmed tender hearts and captivated wayward fancies.

Thus they had it all their own way in the world at large, but in France most especially; in no place more so than in the old castle of Saint Brice. What had brought this Arcadian pair to a rude stone keep, once the home of mailed men and mediæval ladies, and which still frowned above the Atlantic grim and defiant, though the days of chivalry had so long gone by? What had these psuedo children of smiling Greece to do in a land of barren heath, and in a home reared amongst rocks, at the foot of which the mighty waves came beating up all foam and fury, and whence they rolled back to their vast bed with a sullen, conquered roar? Vain questions. Madame de Saint Brice, a young widow smitten with the pastoral mania of her age, had willed it so, and brought them all the way from Paris in a volume indited by the Chevalier de Florian himself. Thus do we find her on a lovely summer morning dressing in her room for the rehearsal of a play in which she was to act Estelle to the Marquis de la Faille's Némorin. He was a widower, an admirer; and the Countess, who longed to be turned into a Marchioness, took unusual pains in adorning her pretty person. She wore a blue taffetas petticoat, short and full, a low pink-laced bodice, clocked stockings, and high-heeled shoes; and on the top of her powdered head was perched a little straw hat wreathed with roses. "Madame la Comtesse looks lovely," said her handmaid Justine.

The Countess thought so too, but was going to utter a modest "Nonsense," when with a scream she exclaimed: "My crook! where is my crook?"

Justine, scarcely less alarmed than her mistress, looked for the crook, a gilt one adorned with blue ribbons, but it had vanished from the corner where it should have been standing. Mistress and maid exchanged looks of dismay; the young Count must have purloined his mother's crook. Downstairs flew the Countess in an agony of fear

wings would not have been more nimble than were her little feet as her high heels clacked down the stone steps worn by generations of feudal ladies. Panting and breathless, she rushed into a low, gaunt room—all the rooms were gaunt at Saint Brice—and there found the young Count in his undress jacket and shirt-sleeves, and in the very act of poising the crook, previous to hurling it, javelin-wise, through the window at an imaginary besieger in the moat below. The Countess snatched the crook from his hand.

"You naughty boy!" she cried; "how dare you!—and why are you not dressed?"

The Count of Saint Brice was a handsome lad, with a brown face and rich black flowing hair; but he was also a haughty young Celt, stubborn and proud, and his lip curled as he answered,

"I will not dress for Corydon. He is a peasant."

"Then how can Madame be Estelle if there is no Corydon to call Némorin when her lamb is drowning?" asked Justine, who was settling the rumpled blue ribbons around the crook.

"Let the lamb be drowned," was the young Count's cruel reply.

"But, my darling," urged the Countess, "you are to be Corydon to the Marquis's little girl Phyllis ——"

"I hate little girls," he interrupted.

Justine uttered a scream. "Oh! If Monsieur le Comte had only seen this Phyllis"—whose real name was Madeleine—"this angel with golden hair and blue eyes, by whose side he, the Count, would look so handsome in his pea-green coat!"

But flattery and entreaties proved vain. Count Philip de Saint Brice stood before the two women, handsome, bold, and defiant, with a stubborn "I will not be Corydon," in answer to all they could urge.

"The pastoral is done for," said the Countess, bursting into tears; "and—and the Marquis will never forgive me."

The Count was a spoiled, disobedient son, but he was a loving one. He could not resist his mother's grief. He threw his arms around her neck, promised to be Corydon, and offered to dress at once.

"And you will not be rude to Phyllis?" said the Countess, taking advantage of his relenting mood.

"No, no," he magnanimously replied; "I shall not."

The Marquis de la Faille lived in a pleasant inland château, with gardens around it that were the Versailles of the province. As they alighted from their stately old carriage, the Countess, pointing to a vista of white statues, shining fountains, and clipped trees, said softly: "Philip, this is beautiful."

"I like the old moat of Saint Brice ten times better," stoutly answered Philip.

"Hush! here is the Marquis. Ah! how well he looks dressed as Némorin!"

It is not usual to dress for rehearsals, but neither the Countess nor her bosom friend, Madame de Mersan, who was to be Eglé, nor the Marquis, nor any of the other people who were to act in the pastoral, would have cared a rush for it, without the dressing. So Némorin, when he appeared at the head of the perron to greet his guests, was in the full bloom of a peach-coloured coat of true shepherd cut, and of a dainty straw hat and ribbons all fresh from Arcadia. He was a fine man, with pale blue eyes and a weak nether-lip, but a very handsome, courtly gentleman withal, though scarcely youthful enough for the part he had chosen. The young Count eyed him with the cool contempt of his coming manhood for a disguise so effeminate, and crossed a noble hall and splendid salons with the same silent scorn of all he saw, till his mother said gaily: "Now, Corydon, here is Phyllis."

Corydon's haughty young eyes fell on a little girl who might be some seven years old or so. She wore a rich white silk petticoat, and a little red velvet bodice laced with blue. A cloud of golden curls fell around her face and slender neck. Her blue eyes were bright as stars, her skin was the whitest Corydon had ever seen; a little black mole, not far from her dimpled chin, made it seem still whiter. When he gazed on this fairy-like being, the young Count felt bewildered and bewitched, not so much with her beauty, though she was very pretty, but because he had never before seen so dainty a little creature. He stared at her in silent admiration, and had eyes for nothing else.

The stage had been erected in a green-house; a few tall shrubs did very well for a bower in the foreground; a real lamb, alive, of course, was to be nearly drowned in a real river which flowed through banks of real grass, and on one of these banks Phyllis was told to sit whilst Corydon, nothing loth, stretched himself at her feet and handed her buttercups and daisies, which her nimble little hands wreathed into garlands. All the characters sustained their parts admirably, with one exception: the lamb bleated at the wrong times, and, unlike the man in the story, would not be drowned in the last act, but had to be pulled by his rose-coloured leash and pushed into a river three inches deep.

But all this was nothing to Corydon and Phyllis, with whom alone we have any concern. This being a rehearsal, they were allowed to talk, and Corydon was prompt to use the privilege.

"What little feet you have got!" he said, looking curiously at the two red leather shoes on the grass by him. "Can you really walk with them?"

"No," replied Phyllis, with a toss of her golden curls; "I do not walk—I run."

There was a pause. Then the boy's lean finger suddenly alighted on the black mole near Phyllis's chin. "How pretty!" he said, admiringly; "is it real?"

"Do not be rude," said Phyllis, tartly, "and give me the buttercups."

There is no knowing how much more Corydon might have said, and Phyllis answered, in this strain, but for a person whom history has called The Severe Aunt. This lady held the whole pastoral in jealous contempt, and though intent on watching Estelle and Némorin, she found some spare vigilance to bestow on the two children. Buttercups and daisies, little feet, and real moles, indeed! At their time of life, too! So first raising her shaggy eyebrows in amazement, then knitting them in wrath, this lady dragon silenced the young pair with a loud "Hush!" Corydon, who cared naught for dragons, looked defiant; but little Phyllis was frightened, and when the first act was over, and the severe aunt's eye averted, she took Corydon's hand and stole away with him unperceived.

That first act was a great success, and Eglé, Madame de Saint Brice's devoted friend, was in rapture with Estelle's acting and good looks. As for Némorin, she declared anyone could see he was smitten. And these dear children! Nature had surely intended them for each other! Almost in the same strain did this amiable Eglé address the severe aunt. That lady was in her darkest mood: was not her brother-in-law making a fool of himself—and at his time of life too—before her very eyes? So when Eglé's soft, flattering voice began commenting, in her ear, on his good looks, fine acting, and so forth, the severe aunt, turning on the speaker, said sharply: "The man that marries more than once is a fool."

Eglé shook her head and really feared he was.

"And the woman who marries more than once," began the severe aunt ——

"Oh! she is a monster," blandly interrupted Eglé, who was a very handsome widow.

"I say she ought to be whipped!" exclaimed the severe aunt.

Slave-owners, it was said, used to like to whip their slaves now and then; so even a figurative whipping may have its enjoyments for some minds. The severe aunt certainly looked at Madame de Saint Brice's plump, white shoulders as if the imaginary rod she was laying across them were pleasant to wield, and, thanks to the satisfaction this harmless rod gave her, Phyllis and Corydon were forgotten.

Happy children! They strayed to the garden between the acts. They ate cherries and cakes. They played, they ran, they sang; their friendship ripening faster than fruit was ever ripened by tropical sun—ripened so fast, indeed, that when the moment for parting came, Phyllis clung to Corydon, and, spite the frowns of the severe aunt, wept and begged that he would not go.

"My dear heart," said Corydon, "I must go, but —" a kiss on the black mole came in here and struck the severe aunt speechless—"I shall soon come again; do not cry."

Here the Marquis interfered, and by promising this tearful Phyllis to take her to see Corydon the next day, he induced her to let the youth

free. Happy Madame de Saint Brice drove away beaming. Philip would marry little Phyllis, of course, and she would marry Phyllis's father, and the golden age had all come back.

The Marquis de la Faille was true to his word. He called on the Countess the very next day, with his sister-in-law and his little daughter. Phyllis at once stole away with Corydon, who put her on his back, and carried her up a steep stone staircase, dark and narrow, to an upper chamber, whence there was a grand view of the rock-bound coast and the foaming Atlantic.

"Would you like to live here?" asked Corydon.

Phyllis shook her head, and uttered a very candid "No."

"What, not live here with me!" exclaimed Corydon, frowning.

"Me" is an irresistible argument with some tender feminine hearts, even at that early age of seven, for Phyllis, suddenly altering her mind, declared, with delightful inconsistency, that she should like it of all things—with Corydon.

"And when you are tall enough," kindly said Corydon, surveying her little figure, "I shall marry you."

"And when we are married, you will carry me on your back as much as I like?" suggested Phyllis, insinuatingly.

Corydon surveyed her little figure again. "I daresay you will never be very heavy," he observed, meditatively; "besides, I cannot marry you just yet, you know. I must fight the king's enemies first. Perhaps I may get both my legs shot under me, like the Count of Boufflers who was killed at Fontenoy, when he was ten years old. He was charging at the head of his own regiment."

Phyllis knew nothing of the kind, but on hearing this piteous story, surely one of the most piteous of those days, she burst into tears, and sobbingly entreated Corydon not to be shot, and not to die. Corydon was already too much of a man not to like to make Phyllis miserable about him, so he only replied, "that he should see," until moved by her grief, he relented, bade her not cry, and comforted her with a kiss, and a lump of sugar-candy which he drew forth from his pocket.

Whilst this young shepherdess and her swain went on with precocious but harmless love-making upstairs, a storm, of which they were the innocent cause, was raging below. In her anxiety to keep watch on her brother-in-law, the severe aunt had neglected to see what became of her niece, but suddenly missing her, she exclaimed:

"My niece! Where is my niece?"

For this lady was one of those persons to whom the possessive pronoun is dear. Némorin had just been whispering some soft nonsense in Estelle's little foolish pink ear; her silly heart was elated, and she replied with much sprightliness, "And where should Phyllis be, save with Corydon?"

"Madame," said the severe aunt, who hated a joke, "I say, where is my niece?"

"And I say, where should Phyllis be, save with Corydon?" retorted the Countess, who was bent on being witty.

The Marquis saw that a battle was imminent. He was an arrant coward, and went to a window, whence he gazed down with profound interest on the dull green moat below. But this neutrality availed him not. The severe aunt carried on the war with such spirit and vigour that in five minutes time she had prostrated her poor little enemy with this home-thrust, which also reached the Marquis in the window:

"Madame, you may Némorin and make a fool of my brother-in-law, but your son shall not Phyllis and make a fool of my niece."

Madame de Saint Brice burst into tears, the Marquis looked foolish, and the door of the salon flew open. Little Phyllis, red as a rose, her bright locks streaming behind her, rushed in, full of glee, "Do not tell him," she cried; "do not tell him I am here," and she crouched behind a huge arm-chair.

In a moment the severe aunt, swift as a falcon, pounced upon this silly little dove and bore her away in her talons, not without enduring some protests in the way of kicking from Phyllis's little red-shoed feet. With a hasty excuse, the Marquis followed, to see, no doubt, that his little daughter did not inflict any injury on his respected relative; and when Corydon entered the room in full cry, with a "I know you are here: I see you," he saw not Phyllis, who had vanished, but his mother in hysterics, and her friend Eglé administering salts and consolations in equal and alternate doses.

"My dear creature," she said, "I will make all right!"

"How can you?" sobbed poor Estelle.

"My dear creature, it is the easiest thing in the world."

And the easiest thing in the world it was, after a fashion, to Madame de Mersan, for to comfort her friend, to soothe the severe aunt, and to save the Marquis from all further troubles of that kind, she married him before a month was over.

Little Madame de Saint Brice died five years after this, declaring that the treachery of her friend had broken her heart. As to the severe aunt, she goes out of the story of Phyllis and Corydon after the wedding-day, but there is no reason to believe that it extinguished her altogether. Indeed, it was an event which brought happiness to none.

Six months after his marriage the Marquis fled to his regiment, in the bosom of which he prudently remained. His wife went to Versailles, where she led a gay life, till having quarrelled with a Princess of the blood, she was ordered back to Brittany, there to remain during His Majesty's pleasure. The lady had a high spirit. She would not vent her displeasure upon her husband, the Princess, or the King, but she would break in Phyllis. It may be that the child was not easily broken in;

perhaps, too, there were too many inconvenient witnesses in the château; for her stepmother soon found that the best means of accomplishing her object was to send Phyllis to her own widowed sister, a Madame du Mésnil, who lived in the neighbouring seaport town. So judgment was held, sentence was passed, and Phyllis was banished from her father's house.

Madame du Mésnil lived close to the harbour, in a gaunt old mansion with tall windows and a nail-studded, oaken door. The aged servant-woman who brought Phyllis to this house, on a summer evening, raised the heavy knocker and let it fall again with a dull sound. A childish face, which looked very bright and rosy in the light of the setting sun, appeared at once behind the cross grating of a window on the ground-floor, and, in a clear, treble voice, this young janitress asked to know what the strangers wanted. When the woman declared their business, the little keeper of the place said, sententiously: "The little girl may come in, but you must not."

The servant tossed her head. She did not want to come in—not she: nor, to do her justice, did she make the attempt; and when the great wooden den was unbarred and unlocked from within, she just thrust in poor Phyllis, and walked away.

The little girl of the house was very pretty; she was also younger and shorter than Phyllis, though she was oddly dressed in a faded blue-silk sacque much too long for her, and wore a huge lace cap—quite big enough for a woman—on the top of her little fair-haired head.

"Come this way," she said, after surveying Phyllis from top to toe; and she clattered up a dark, old staircase, making a great noise with her shoe-heels, which were prodigiously high.

"What is your name?" she said to Phyllis, as they entered together a very dingy, old salon; then, without waiting for an answer, "My name is Manon. How old are you? I am thirteen. Stand by me and let us see in the glass which is the taller of the two," continued this little lady, leading her companion to a dull, old mirror, and rising on tip-toe to survey her own image. It was a very lovely image, though so oddly attired, and the bright young face beneath the cap bore some resemblance to Phyllis's sad, childish countenance—such resemblance as one may find between the radiant sun and his pale sister the moon.

"I am the taller of the two," said Manon. "The heels of my shoes have nothing to do with it," she sharply added, detecting the look Phyllis cast at her feet. Then, in the same breath, she informed her visitor that she would have to give up her fine clothes: "for you will have to sweep the floors and wash the dishes, you know," she added, raising her young eyebrows. "But I shall let you sleep in my bed. Come and look at my room."

Obedient Phyllis went. Manon's room was like the salon, like the

whole house—dingy and faded; the hangings were moth-eaten, the blue lampas bed-curtains had lost almost every vestige of colour, the furniture was so old that it seemed ready to crumble to pieces. Everything looked so dull and so dreary in the dim twilight that Phyllis began to feel afraid. Was she alone with Manon in that great house?

"What about it?" answered Manon; "her mother and her two big sisters, Jeanne and Marie, were only gone to the play with the Viscount and the Marquis. They were Gardes du Pavillon, you know, and she, Manon, would go to the play, too, a year hence."

Then began a glowing account of all the delights which the town afforded, in the way of plays, balls, and masquerades; and the Gardes du Pavillon figured so often in these narratives that Phyllis, wondering, asked who these gentlemen were.

"They are naval officers, you know," said Manon; "they are all nobles, all young, all handsome, and oh! they are so wicked!" she added, raising her eyebrows again.

"How so?" asked Phyllis beneath her breath.

"Why, they spread nets at night in the streets to catch the girls, you know," said Manon, "and they take them to the King's ships and sail away with them; and when they owe a good deal of money, they catch their creditors and carry them off to India and never pay them!" added Manon, triumphantly. "Then, when they have a fancy to it, they turn every one out of the theatre and keep the house to themselves. Oh, they are so wicked! But we need not be afraid; we are nobles, and they only catch tradesmen's daughters, you know."

Phyllis drew little comfort from this assurance, and timorously asked to go to bed. Perhaps she thought the terrible Gardes du Pavillon could not find her under the bed-clothes if they should take a fancy to invade the house. Manon let her creep into the big old bed, but kept her awake by talking of balls, Gardes du Pavillon, and a pink satin robe belonging to her elder sister which that young lady had promised to give her at some future period of time. 'Spite Manon's chatter and her own fears, Phyllis at length fell asleep, but towards dawn a great noise in the street below woke her. She heard a clash of swords, a woman's shriek, then all was still. Hiding her head under the quilt, she shook with fear, whilst Manon slept and dreamed of pink satin.

Even if Manon's stories had been false, Phyllis would have believed every word of them; but it so happened that they were true—tragic stories that still live in the records of those evil days, and which received the most tragic of all endings in the scaffold of ninety-three. Men were turned out with contumely from the theatre of Brest because the blood in their veins was not blue; the accounts of noble debtors were settled by luring plebeian creditors on board the King's ships and carrying them off to sea, and nets were spread in the streets of the city for girls and women who were not of the patrician race.

To that favoured race, though much fallen in substance, and still more in honour, Madame du Mésnil belonged. She had beautiful daughters, and made the most of them. These young ladies were much admired by Messieurs les Gardes du Pavillon, and admiration sometimes took the shape of wine, sometimes it appeared as so many yards of velvet and satin. Nay, a turkey and a quarter of lamb often expressed the power of Jeanne's bright eyes and of Marie's smiles. Money was probably a rare offering, for Madame's last servant had left because her wages had not been paid for two years, and it was to supply her place and get her spirit properly broken that Phyllis had been placed under this good lady's care.

A hard life Phyllis had of it now. Manon was kind to her in a capricious sort of way, and kept her awake at nights talking of her future triumphs; but every one else was harsh and scornful to Phyllis. She was clothed in coarse grey camlet, to begin with, and made to do all the dirty work of the house. Nay, to her great terror, she had to go out on errands in the city and out of it, to get dainties for Madame du Mésnil and her daughters, who were fond of good things. Thus, one bleak morning in autumn Phyllis was bid to go and get these ladies some fresh watercresses from a little spring which flowed through a farm outside the town. "And if you cannot get any, why, you need not come back," said Madame du Mésnil from the door-step.

Thus dismissed, Phyllis went forth. With a sad heart, she walked along a bleak, bare road, feeling every blast of the cold northern wind through her thin camlet gown: but she was warm enough by the time she reached the farm-house. It was shut up—all the people were gone to a neighbouring fair; only an angry dog, who growled at her from behind the door, had been left within. Phyllis wandered about disconsolately till she came to a little wood already turning sere and red beneath the grey wintry sky. Footsore and weary, the child took the first path she found; scarcely had she walked a few steps when she saw an old brown rock covered with green mosses and patches of hoary lichens, and beneath it there bubbled forth a clear spring, which widened into a broad pool covered with a very forest of watercresses. This, then, was the goal of her journey. Phyllis was very tired, and the first thing she did was to sit down by the rock and rest. The spot was green and lonely, yet the child was not afraid. Maybe she felt all unconsciously that unkind voice and unkind eyes could not reach her here, and so she let the sweetness and tender calm of nature fall on her little troubled heart. Never, it seemed to Phyllis, had she seen anything so pretty and so green as this spot. Summer still lingered here, if not in its warmth, at least in its lovely verdure. A tuft of hart's tongue grew under the rock, and the long green glossy leaves drooped above the water. Delicate grasses and tall reeds waved in every little breath of wind, and pale blue flowers blossomed on the sandy bank,

against which the rippling water broke at the poor, tired feet of little Phyllis.

At length she was rested, and set about her task. It was harder of accomplishment than Phyllis had imagined it to be. The watercresses grew in the middle of the pool, and every time she tried to reach them she slipped down the edge of the bank into the water. She was soon wet up to the knees, and still the watercresses remained far away, inaccessible, and grew like a fairy isle. Phyllis tried them from every side of the pool; she bent over the rock to reach at them, and nearly tumbled into the water, and still those provoking cresses kept in their stronghold, and thence seemed to bid defiance to all her efforts. The water was so shallow, and Phyllis was so wet, that she might as well have waded through to get her booty; but that little dark pool on whose heart the gloomy shadow of the trees was lying seemed unfathomably deep to the timid child, so she stood on the edge, hopeless of accomplishing the task that had been laid upon her; and, fearful of returning home without having accomplished it, she wrung her hands in her helplessness and distress, and at length, fairly giving way, she sat down and burst into tears. Many and bitter were the thoughts that came to Phyllis as she wept. She knew that her father was noble and rich; why then was she the drudge and the servant of these strange women? This very spot might belong to the Marquis, for all his little daughter could say to the contrary, for he owned many a broad acre of the land that lay around his château. Was it not then a hard fate, that she, his child, should be sitting thus on the bare earth, her wet clothes clinging to her shivering limbs, and her heart sinking within her at the thought of going back empty-handed to the stern task-mistress who had been set over her? Yes, it was a hard lot, and the more Phyllis thought over it, the more she wept and gave way to her sorrow. And now it happened to her as it so often happens in the fairy tales: when the clouds are heaviest some bright sunbeam comes and pierces them. Little Phyllis was sitting thus, feeling all forlorn and quite heart-broken, when help came to her. Tramp, tramp, sounded a horse's hoofs along the road—for the pool was on the skirt of the wood—and as the tramp grew nearer there came with it a rushing sound through the thicket, and a dog ran down to the water's edge and began drinking eagerly by her side. Phyllis ceased her weeping to look at him. He was the most beautiful dog she had ever seen—silky, brown with white paws, a white star on his forehead, and a brass collar, bright as gold, round his neck. When the dog had done drinking he went sniffing round Phyllis, who remained quiet, for she was afraid; then he sat down by her and looked at her with his big brown eyes, so clear and so honest, whilst his red tongue lolled out of his mouth. It seemed to Phyllis as if he were trying to understand her trouble, and were asking her, in his canine way, to tell him all about it. She shook

her head at him with a sigh, and stretching out her little hand, stroked his brown coat, softly saying, like a child as she was: "It is no use telling you, for you know you could not help me."

As she thus addressed him, she bent to see what name was inscribed on the dog's collar, and with a start and a flush of surprise, she read:

FIDÈLE.

Belongs to the Count of Saint Brice.

This dog's master was the young Count whom, for his mother's sake, her stepmother so hated; that Corydon whom she had not seen for seven years, but whom she remembered so well. Meanwhile, the tramp, tramp, of the horse's hoofs was now close by. A shrill whistle called the truant away, and as he did not obey the summons, a clear young voice cried out, "Fidèle."

But Fidèle only whined and barked, perplexed. For some reason or other he would not leave Phyllis. His master, who knew that all this land belonged to the Marquis de la Faille, and who feared lest the dog should run down the game of a gentleman between whom and himself there was little love, alighted hastily and went to seek him.

Burning with shame at her humbled and fallen state, Phyllis crept round the rock and hid herself as the young man came up calling the dog. But he saw her, and said kindly, "Do not hide, child: I will not hurt you!" Phyllis, however, did not stir, so the Count, who had some natural curiosity in him, walked round the rock and found her standing there, with her back towards him and her face hidden in her hands.

"I tell you, child, I will not hurt you," he said again, and gently compelling her to turn round, he removed her hands from her crimson face.

Bitter was Phyllis's shame at appearing thus, in her coarse grey camlet gown, so wet and unseemly, before the young Corydon who had once seen her in all the splendour of a white silk petticoat and red velvet bodice. She felt as if she must have sunk down to the very earth and been swallowed up by it, when, looking up at him, now grown to man's estate, she saw him so handsome, so gay, in a hunting-suit of grey laid with gold. She only hoped he would not know her again. Vain hope! The young Count's olive cheek grew flushed, his bright dark eyes lit. "Phyllis," he cried, "why, you are my Phyllis."

But on that first cry of surprise and joy followed the saddest wonder. "Phyllis, what brings you here alone? And you are all wet and shivering! Why, my little Phyllis, what has happened?"

She gazed up in his face. She read the tender kindness there, kindness all for her, so long unused to the sweet food; and being but a child, she threw her arms around him and cried piteously. When Phyllis was calmer, she found herself sitting again on the grassy earth; the young Count was sitting by her side, chafing her cold hands in his, and Fidèle —to keep her warm, no doubt—had coiled himself at her feet. Phyllis

related her sad little story to her old friend. He made no comments, but heard her with mingled wrath and sorrow. Fame had already told him strange tales of Madame du Mésnil's two beautiful daughters; Phyllis was still very young—a mere child; but these ladies should not be her companions. He resolved that they should not tempt her to folly and sin if he could prevent it. Of all this, however, he said not a word. His silence awed Phyllis, and feeling somewhat shy, she made a timid attempt to rise.

"I must try again and get the watercresses," she said, with a sigh. "I dare not go home without them."

"I shall get you plenty," he said, kindly; "do not think of that, or of these women, Phyllis. Be guided by me, and all will go well with you. Tell no one that we have met—not a soul."

"Oh! no, no," answered Phyllis, shaking her little wise head, as much as to say that she knew better.

"I do not know when we shall meet again," he resumed.

"I can come for more watercresses to-morrow," suggested Phyllis, in her innocence.

"I shall be far away by to-morrow," said the young Count, smiling, "and who knows, Phyllis, if you and I shall ever meet again?"

She heard him with a blank face. He had come down from heaven itself to comfort her, it seemed, and now he was going away, going perhaps for ever!

"But I will not leave France," continued the Count, "without seeing you righted, Phyllis. I will go to the King himself in Versailles, and tell him how you, his poor little subject, are treated. Those cruel women shall not hold you in bondage a week longer, Phyllis, not one."

But Phyllis did not heed these promises of future good. She looked up in his face till her eyes were blinded with tears.

"And shall I not see you again?" she asked, clinging to him; "never, never again?"

The young Count hesitated. He was bound on a daring and dangerous task. The breezes which now blew over France spoke but faintly of shepherds and their lambs, but told in a clarion voice, loud and shrill, of freedom and equality and the rights of man; and the young Count, once so haughty, having caught the fever of the times, was going to join the Marquis de la Fayette, and to fight with him for American liberty. He might come back, indeed, from the war; but he might also leave his young bones in that strange land and never more see the face of Phyllis.

"Nay; I may come back," he said, hopefully. "I may come back, Phyllis."

"Then, promise that you will," she cried, almost impetuously, "for if you promise, I know you will do it."

The pathetic faith of this poor forlorn child went to the young

Count's heart. He did not promise, but he looked down in her face with tender pity. This little Phyllis, whom he remembered bright as a rose, was now pale as a lily. Her eyes were sad, her lips were wan, her young beauty had vanished; only her golden hair was unchanged, also that little black mole which nestled near her dimpled chin. It was by that mole he had known her again, and now, as he looked at it, his heart began to beat. Then all at once the dream of his boyhood came back to him, and it returned with the fervour of his young manhood.

"Phyllis," he said, with some vehemence, "I do promise to come back to you, but you must also keep the promise you made seven years ago. Will you?"

Phyllis too remembered that old compact, for her little face became very red, but she said, "Yes," at once.

The Count drew a gold ring from his little finger, and put it upon the biggest finger he could find in her childish hand, but it was still too large, and would fit none.

"I shall wear it round my neck," said Phyllis, joyfully; "I know they would take it from me."

"Until you give me back that ring—my mother's wedding-ring," said the Count, "I am yours; and until I ask it again you are mine. Is it so?"

"Yes," said Phyllis, turning pale with the solemnity of the pledge; "it is so."

"And now we must part; good-bye, my Phyllis; good-bye, my dear wife."

They rose. The Count took this childish wife of his in his arms and kissed the black mole on her cheek with tender devotion. No knight ever loved his lady, no young bridegroom ever loved his young bride, more fondly than the young Count loved this little pale, sorrowful Phyllis then.

"Good-bye," she sobbed; "good-bye, but oh! do come back soon; and oh! please will you get me some watercresses before you go?"

"Ay, that I will," said Corydon, setting his teeth; "but let them dare to use you so much longer, my Phyllis; let them!"

When he had gathered watercresses enough, he said again that it was time to go, and again they parted. Phyllis kissed her lover and kissed Fidèle; then the young man rode away, and his dog followed him, not without casting a wistful look behind; and Phyllis, sitting down once more on the edge of the pool, felt very sorrowful and very happy; for if her fairy prince was gone, "He will come back," thought Phyllis; "he will come back."

The young Count too had his thoughts as he rode away. Little childish Phyllis, the watercresses, and his mother's ring were all running in his head. He felt rather astonished to find himself solemnly

pledged to a child with a black mole. What if the black mole were at the bottom of it all! Magic was not quite over yet in those days, and witches all had moles. Was his little Phyllis a witch? "She may be what she likes," thought the young soldier of La Fayette, with a great throb of love at his heart. "Never shall I wed another woman than this one—never, never."

In the meanwhile Phyllis went home with her watercresses, and caught a bad cold for having been wet, and a severe scolding for having remained out so long. And the young Count, who left Saint Brice that same night, saw the King in Versailles, and told him her story. So before the week was out, before even the Count sailed across the Atlantic, his Majesty sent down a special messenger to remove Mdlle. de la Faille from the house of Madame du Mésnil and place her in a convent, to be educated there with other noble damsels, until her father should take her once more under his own care.

(*Concluded next month.*)

TOO BRIGHT TO LAST.

How radiant once was life to me!
So deck'd with flowers,
That nought but sunbeams could I see
To gild the hours.

To breathe, to move was strange delight;
To feel, to dream
That all things new and fair to sight
Were what they seem.

Could I recall those sunny years
And not the pain,
The cloudless morn and not the tears,
'Twere all in vain.

Like some old tree by tempest torn,
Now is my heart
Riven, but not of green leaves shorn;
Fresh still in part!

A. K. B.

FANNY BURNEY.

IT was the days of back-boards and samplers. Female beauty was at a premium, as it always was and always will be while the world lasts. Female political activity was highly prized, too, for just then that sort of thing was the fashion. Female drawing-room wit was looked upon as a very pretty commodity, worthy to be worn by a duchess with her diamonds. But female authorship was down in the very dust of the streets, and was considered only fit for a vagabond mad woman such as poor Charlotte Smith.

At this period there came tripping into a London nursery, just in the very centre of all the gossip and pleasure of the town, a little girl called Fanny Burney. Seeing that the three ways of distinction above named were the only ones that at that time were open to women, it seemed likely, as little Fanny passed from the nursery into the school-room, and began to develop in mind and body, that she would never do anything but sit by her own fireside, and perhaps achieve wonders in worsted work. Her figure was short, and not remarkable for grace, and her features were common-place. Though interested in some degree in politics—as no one could help being in those days, when party spirit permeated every rank in society—she never entered into any violent disputes about them. She was very reserved and shy in general company, and seemed almost to fear the sound of her own voice.

It was lucky for this plain little girl that she had a father who did not exactly agree with the then most popular form of opinion about female education. Dr. Burney was a sweet-tempered, large-hearted man, who could not understand why girls should not enjoy a certain amount of mental cultivation. Of course they were not to be taught Greek or Latin, or mathematics, like boys: such enormities as that never came within the scope of even the good doctor's imagination, any more than it did that a daughter of his could ever be known in print. But according to his way of thinking, a woman might learn enough to give her something to employ her mind if ever she had to sit alone, and to prevent her, when any other topic was mentioned in society beyond dress or the newest scandal, from making a dangerous leap in the dark if she were quick-witted, and if she were stupid, from stumbling at once into a swamp of hopeless silence.

The Miss Burneys were well grounded in French and Italian, were given clear ideas in history and geography, were allowed to read translations of the classics, and had a correct musical taste instilled into them.

Over this latter branch of their teaching their musically-gifted father, no doubt, especially presided. Throughout her life Fanny, though no great musical performer, always seems to have known good music from bad.

There was a better teaching, however, for the embryo novelist than any that books or governesses or masters could afford, at her father's table, and in his drawing-room, where often gathered all the greatest men of the day. There flashed the wit of Garrick. There rolled forth the stately sentences of Johnson. There were spread out all the rich stores of anecdote and information that fell from the tongue of Barretti.

Besides these grand talkers and thinkers, a crowd of smaller folk filled Dr. Burney's rooms, for he lived in the very deepest whirlpool of London society. There were young gentlemen that affected foreign airs, and young ladies that affected a fashionable drawl; old gentlemen that could never forget they had once been young, and old ladies that delighted in gaudy colours.

In a corner sat the plain little daughter of the house, catching each word that fell from the lips of genius, and storing it up in her retentive memory; thinking what a delightful thing it must be to be a star, such as all these men were, and looking as closely into each trick of eye or hand of all the men and women there as a scholar looks into the characters of a difficult MS. Strangers did not disturb her; there was nothing in her face or manner to interest them; if they thought about her at all, they no doubt imagined that she was settling what would be the best combination of colours in the next purse she should net.

Her relations also let her amuse herself in her own way in society, though it was certainly very different from that of other people. They loved her for her affectionate words and deeds towards them, and for the shrewd sayings with which she often brightened the family breakfast-table; and so, like the sensible, easy-tempered folk they were, they let her quietly be. Probably their ambition for her was a very moderate one: its utmost extent most likely being that one day she should change her name for that of some respectable middle-aged clergyman or barrister.

Fanny watched and watched and watched, caring very little what the people around her thought of her, but, on her side, thinking a great deal about them, until at length an irresistible desire seemed to grow upon her to turn into word-portraits the thoughts and observations of which her mind was so full. This longing grew so strong that at last, in the silence of her own room, when no one was by, she yielded to it. By degrees what were at first but scattered sketches formed themselves almost without her knowing how, into a consecutive narrative, in which a heroine lovely as Lady Crewe or the Duchess of Devonshire, or any of the other worshipped beauties of the day, made her way hither and thither among groups, some laughing, some sad, some grimacing: all

life-like in their way, according to the life in the midst of which she had moved since childhood. Her characters often seem to us strange and unnatural; and, in truth, one of Fanny Burney's great faults as a novelist was a tendency to over-draw; but when we accuse her of this, we must, at the same time, remember the difference in manners between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

When her first longing was thus satisfied of seeing clearly upon paper what had been so clear in her mind, it was replaced by another. How strange and amusing it would be to see what she had written in print! How terrible, and yet how delightful, to know what the rest of the world would think of it! To become an authoress was, however, a most frightful and tremendous plunge for a young woman of that day, and her doubts and hesitations spread over a very large space of time.

At length, encouraged by her sisters, who were now in the secret, she went to her father's study, MS. in hand, and revealed the awful fact: she had written a novel and wanted to publish it. At first Dr. Burney stared blankly, as well he might. Who could have expected such a thing as this from his silent daughter Fanny. Then he glanced at the MS., but only glanced, for just then he was plunged heart and soul in some of his beloved musical studies; he had engagements for the afternoon, and had no time to waste.

After that he gave a few minutes to thinking over the matter. The idea of one of his daughters being an authoress was certainly a very new one; but being a quiet-tempered, brave man, he grasped it and looked into it, and found there was nothing so terrible about it, after all. The pen certainly could not be called an unfeminine tool, and as for a sheet of white paper, why, there was no denying that it was quite a lady-like thing. Most likely the book would fall dead from the press; if it did not, and if it ever became a little known, and the fact leaked out who was the authoress, he was quite sure Fanny would have written nothing of which a woman need be ashamed. So he ended by kissing his daughter and telling her, in that sweet-tempered, easy way which made him so beloved by his own family, that she might do just as she liked about her book; then he went back to his writing-table and quickly forgot all about the whole affair in a maze of tetrachords and fugues.

It is impossible to exonerate Dr. Burney's conduct from blame in this matter. Out of mere indolence, he failed to give his daughter help and advice, at a time when both were greatly needed by an inexperienced girl. Had he been active in Fanny's cause as a father ought to have been, "Evelina" never would have been sold to a publisher for £20 as it ultimately was.

At last the book was printed and published. Fanny went about her familiar employments at home, trembling and palpitating; partly because she thought herself bound in duty so to do, and partly because

she was really anxious with an author's healthy anxiety. A month had not gone by before every drawing-room in town was ringing with the name of "Evelina." The book was laid to the account of every man of genius in turn. Fashionable ladies smiled and looked arch, and were well pleased when they were accused of it. People in the country woke up from their normal state of intellectual dulness and implored their friends in town to send them a copy. It was such an entirely new thing to have an amusing book written in simple English, that every one could understand, written about things that every one had experienced more or less; written, most wonderful of all, in such a tone that everybody, even the youngest girls, might read it; and this book, moreover, was a novel, a sort of literary composition that has always made its way quicker than any other into the homes of common-place men and women.

The name of the author soon rose to the surface of the sea of conjecture, as such secrets always do. In a moment Fanny leapt from being the obscure little Miss Burney into the position of one of the chief lions of London society. No wonder that such a change turned somewhat her head, and that from that time forward she became possessed by a certain amount of vanity, which clung to her to the end of her days.

This was the brightest and most glorious part of Fanny Burney's long life. Men began to seek her society, and Fanny, like all her sex on such occasions, was equal to the situation, and developed quickly into the demure flirt which she remained until she was quite an old woman. Duchesses and countesses caressed her. At public assemblies she was stared at as much as any of the most well-known beauties. Many interesting pictures rise up before us as we look back at this period of her story; and we cannot help pausing to glance at a few of them.

Far enough from London to be in the country, and yet near enough to catch the sound of every wave of social and political gossip that floats from the capital, we see a friendly-looking house in a pretty setting of shrubberies and pleasure grounds. There are no armorial bearings in the hall that tell of long descent; but the armorial bearings of wealth are to be seen on all sides, in the shape of soft carpets and gilded cornices. The master of this splendid house helps Fanny Burney from her carriage as if she were a princess. The lady with the pretty, piquante, wilful face who stands on the doorstep folds her fondly in her arms. Throughout her chequered life Fanny Burney probably never spent happier hours than those she passed beneath the roof of Thrale, the great brewer, and his charming, many-sided wife.

Miss Burney is on good terms, too, with another young lady who is a constant inmate at the Thrales' house, though this young lady is in some sort a rival, inasmuch that, as Fanny Burney is herself a prodigy

among the women of that day, in the way of being an authoress, this young lady is a prodigy in the way of being a classical scholar. In her calm, faultless beauty, she looks as cold as a Greek statue, and yet, within the marble there is so much of the coquette that she can't even let poor middle-aged married Mr. Thrale be free from her snares. A sweet smile is always upon her lips, and yet she possesses the strange accomplishment of crying any moment to amuse her friends, just as any other woman might sing or play. She has the deep learning of a college don, yet somehow her talk is shallow. This lady is Sophy Stretfield.

One day Fanny comes fluttering and blushing into the room, where an elderly man sits upon a sofa. He is awkwardly built, and his features are plain, yet, in spite of that, we are interested in him at once, for his face is marked with the graving tool of genius. His voice is rough, but there are kindly cadences in it. At first Fanny is very shy and silent with him. By degrees, however, she sinks into the seat at his side; by degrees the large arm creeps round the slender waist, and before they part the old man's lips press the girl's brow. Never was there a closer friendship between man and woman than that which existed between old Samuel Johnson and Fanny Burney from that hour forward until the day when she sat sobbing on the stairs outside the door of the room where he lay dying.

This afternoon there is a grand dinner party in the house of the wealthy brewer. Every one round the table has a handle to his or her name, a handle ornamented with a coronet, or a handle round which laurels are twined; laurels of war, laurels of literature, or political laurels which are a trifle dusty. One man, however, quickly distinguishes himself from the rest of the company, brilliant though it is. His tongue is a very enchanter's wand; as you listen to him he makes you believe that a goose is a swan, and then again that a swan is a goose, in the same five minutes. Touched by him the most common-place events are turned into thrilling stories. His expressive face keeps silent accompaniment to his words. Fanny hangs upon his lips as does every one else; how can they help it? But suddenly she starts and glows; those wonderful eyes are turned full upon her, and he ends an animated sentence with the words, "No, not even Miss Burney's imagination could do that." That was the first compliment paid her by Edmund Burke.

A man somewhat past middle age, with a calm, observant face, a quiet voice, and an ear-trumpet in his hand, sits often at the Thrales' fireside. When he is there Mrs. Thrale flutters a good deal round Fanny, arranging her ribbons and trying to make her talk her best; but though he seems to like a chat well enough with the young authoress the gentleman won't do what he is wanted to do, and Miss Burney never becomes Lady Reynolds, the great painter's wife.

To-night we are at a grand gathering in London. Lights and jewels and eyes are shining; but brighter than all flashes the wit of one man. Even the air around him must surely be sparkling with fun. The veriest sluggard of a brain that ever slumbered in a human skull must awake up at contact with him. Yet even in the midst of one of his proudest social triumphs, Sheridan pauses to tell Fanny Burney that she is the first woman of her day. But we must dwell no longer on such pictures, for there is still much to tell.

In due time "Cecilia" followed "Evelina." It is the best of Miss Burney's novels; but even had it been the worst, it would have been well received by the public on account of its elder sister's success. This time the author's interests were attended to, and the publishers did not have it all their own way.

We now come to the greatest mistake in Fanny Burney's life. Queen Charlotte took it into her head, why or wherefore it is impossible to say—for the royal mind was certainly guiltless of any literary flavour—to wish to attach the novelist to her own household. She offered her the place of maid of honour, which was then vacant. The authoress herself hesitated; but her relations, and especially her father, one of whose faults was always a too close clinging to the skirts of greatness, threw in their influence on the Queen's side, and the place was accepted. Fanny Burney went from her well-won queendom in the kingdom of letters to serve in a palace.

There is little pleasure in dwelling on the several years she spent in the royal household. The ink-bottle was laid aside for the care of silks and velvets. The compliments of Burke and Sheridan were exchanged for the insipid common-places of equerries with three-quarter's of an idea in their heads, and the sparkling chat of Mrs. Thrale for the company of the snappish old German frau who was her companion in her office, and whose thoughts were all contained in a snuff-box and a cribbage-board. Her body, which was delicately organised, like the bodies of most artists, whether of the brush or the pen, but which had been healthy and active in the ease of home-life, gave way in the constant waiting on a mistress who certainly never erred on the side of too great indulgence to her servants, and she suffered from frequent physical weakness. Her position, of course, gave her certain privileges, such as her view of Warren Hastings' trial; but these were far outweighed by the incessant restraint in which she was forced to live. She tried to make her relations, and even herself, believe that she loved her gilded chains; but the truth often peeps out painfully in her journals and letters.

With time things got worse instead of better; the servant grew weaker, the mistress more exacting. It is impossible to help feeling indignant with Queen Charlotte for her conduct towards Miss Burney at this period. Not a moment was lessened in the time which

etiquette appointed that the fainting maid of honour must stand; the bell had to be answered, though the weary limbs were literally dragged up the palace stairs; when sinking with inanition on a journey, she might not even eat a biscuit in the Queen's presence. Surely a little kindly care for one so near her own person would have become the Queen, the mother of her people, more than her diamonds, even though the sufferer had been a common-place young lady, instead of one of the first women of genius of her day.

Among the gentlemen attached to the Court there was one who was a man of taste and reading. Naturally enough, Miss Burney preferred his society to that of any other of her companions; and naturally enough, too, she first drifted into a sober flirtation with him, and then into what, on the lady's side, was very like love. What it was on that of the gentleman, it is impossible to say; we can only judge from the end, which was that just when Fanny Burney was expecting him to speak the decisive word, she heard he had brought home a pretty young wife.

This disappointment put the finishing stroke to what the burden of weary service had long been doing. Her health entirely gave way, and with a pretty trifle by way of remembrance, and a small pension, she left the royal household.

Rest, and the care of loving friends, and skilful medical advice soon restored her. The best tonic, however, was the society of a certain M. d'Arblay, a French refugee. D'Arblay was a soldier and a gentleman, and a man of much mind and character. This tonic did its work so well, that before long Fanny Burney threw off her invalid wrappers and bloomed forth as Madame d'Arblay the bride.

The marriage was a happy one. The pair were poor; for the greater part of M. d'Arblay's fortune had been lost in the French revolution; but only one child, a boy, came; and "Camilla," Fanny's third book, made an important addition to the family purse. They lived in a pretty suburban cottage, and were brightened by the visits of many friends.

This quiet home happiness was not, however, to last for many years for Madame d'Arblay. After the peace of Amiens, D'Arblay crossed the channel, called by family business; and his wife soon followed him. Just after that, war broke out afresh between France and England, and for many years Madame d'Arblay was forced to live in a foreign land, only receiving, now and then, scanty news of English friends. This was no small distress to her, loving her own relations as she did. The exigencies of his position also made her husband frequently absent from her.

She made friends, however, in Paris, and was cheerful in the main, and interested in all around her. She saw Napoleon ride on his white charger into the court of the Tuileries, and made acquaintance with Madame la Fayette.

Madame d'Arblay was in Brussels at the time of the battle of Waterloo, and went through that agony of glory which was the share of all English women who were in the Belgian capital during those memorable three days. She trembled for her husband, who was in a regiment on the side of the allies.

M. and Madame d'Arblay returned to England after the peace of 1815, and glided together quietly and lovingly down the decline of life. Her husband died before her, and so did her son. This latter loss was a cruel blow to her old age; but deep religious faith and a cheerful temper upheld her to the last; and the authoress of "Evelina" passed away honoured and tranquil, and full of days.

ALICE KING.

TUBEROSES.

TAKE them away from me, darling!
Throw them into the street—
Out where their delicate freshness
Will be crushed by passing feet.

Their heavy, oppressive sweetness
Is worse than the odour of death:
I am sick and faint; and their presence
Is stifling my very breath.

You did not know that I loved him?
Then for you I will open the door
Of my heart's most secret temple—
That never was opened before.

In a maze of enrapturing madness,
I worshipped him day by day:
Till at length I woke from my dreaming
To find that my idol was clay.—

Fold far back the curtains,
Let in the night air now:
Perhaps it will quiet my pulses;
Perhaps cool my burning brow.—

Do you yet remember that evening,
When the haughty Lady Clare
Swept past me with white tuberoses
In the braids of her midnight hair?

I remember their sickly fragrance,
And my soul's despairing thrill:
What a dirge crept into the music,
How the air grew heavy and chill!

She was beautiful; proud as a princess;
And the charm of her wonderful eyes
Would have won a seraph's allegiance
From an angel in the skies.

I saw him bending o'er her,
Till his bright hair swept her cheek;
And the love in his ardent glances
His lips scarce dared to speak.

And later I watched them dancing,
With a dreary, bitter pain,
And saw him press her jewelled hands,
With a numb, bewildered brain.

Ah well, sweet friend, I will tell you:
She won him—and that is all;
And the clouds that drape my life since then
Are black as a funeral pall.

Then take them away from me, darling!
Throw them into the street—
Out where their delicate freshness
Will be crushed by passing feet.

For a breath of their faintest odour
Brings back that bitter night,
When the midnight gloom for ever
Shut out life's golden light.

NELLY'S VALENTINE.

By Anne Beale.

THERE is little doubt that most pretty women like what is called "innocent flirtation." It is not at all necessary to visit the ball-rooms of the aristocracy to find flirts and coquettes: they are quite as numerous amongst the rural lanes and villages of the country district; and, in spite of the danger of incurring the imputation of being an encourager of such pert damsels, we must confess that your regular coquettish village beauty is a very amusing and attractive individual. Human nature is much the same, whether in court or cottage, and beauty and a certain sort of espièglerie, are quite as common or *un*-common in the one as the other. To many sparkling and lovely women, a power of fascination and desire of admiration are as natural as to look in the glass; to others they are imparted by degrees, as the knowledge of their capabilities dawns upon them. This is like all other learning, and to be acquired gradually. Sweet is the consciousness of the first conquest to the coquette; but it is not until she has conquered all around her, that the coquette is satisfied. Of course this is very naughty. We would not for worlds uphold such a system, but here and there there are such delightful, open, mischievous little flirts, that whilst you scold them, you cannot help loving them. Still there is a nice distinction to be drawn between the flirt and the coquette, but we must be pardoned for not diving into the metaphysics of the subject in this sketch of a village damsel, who possessed a fair share of the attributes of both.

When, where, and how Nelly Morris first learnt her early lessons in this abstruse art, it seems impossible to say. It may be that she was one of those with whom it was born. If not, she must have picked up instruction from the streams, birds, and insects, that murmured, warbled, and buzzed their teaching in her ear, for she was bred in the very heart of the woods and fields. The cottage of her parents stood quite alone, on the brink of a clear little stream, at the bottom of a meadow, and they had half a mile's walk, through beaten foot-paths and lanes, to gain the turnpike-road. Her father was a labourer of steady, regular habits; her mother a quiet, homely body.

But Nelly, when she was grown to woman's estate, came to reside in our town. The change from a cottage by a brook, in the midst of fields, to a small country town, was as great to Nelly as would be that of a sudden transportation of a country-town belle to the metropolis. A stray caller or foot-passenger going by the house had been a person of vast importance to her, her mother, and younger brothers and sisters,

for they rarely saw a stranger, except on market-days and Sundays; but in her new position, she had but to stand at the door to behold at least three or four people at once! Astounding gaiety! It must have been a very wet day indeed, when that number was not visible; and she was not long in attracting nearly as many to herself, whenever she made her appearance.

Nelly began her career as nursemaid in a small tradesman's family; but that did not quite suit her: carrying a baby was decidedly disagreeable, and bad for the figure. She preferred trying her fortunes in a decent public-house, where she might find remuneration and amusement at the same time: so she scrubbed the floors, washed the dishes, drew the ale, lighted the fires, and flirted to her heart's content at the "Half Moon" for about a twelvemonth. But she was a girl of an aspiring turn of mind. In spite of the real enjoyment she had in her new place, she did not think it genteel enough for her; she must get into respectable service. So she went as maid-of-all-work to a very strict-minded old lady, who resided a little way out of the town. Here she was tolerably demure for some weeks, and a miracle of cleanliness.

But, alas for human patience! she was in a house where "followers" had never been allowed. Nelly without beaux, was Nelly without more than two-thirds of her nature. Her mistress watched one, two, three, four—she was tired of counting them—young men talking to this forward girl. In short, no one passed the house that had not a pleasant word or a compliment for "Mrs. Jones, the Cottage's" smart servant. Mrs. Jones spoke out her disapprobation loudly, and said she expected her servant to be steady, and always in the house; not standing at the back door, gossiping with whomsoever chanced to pass that way. Nelly wondered whether Mrs. Jones expected to get anyone who would shut themselves out from society and have nobody to talk to but herself and her cat. For her part, she had been used to see people, and could not live in such a melancholy way; so if Mrs. Jones expected it, they had better part. She! the minx! who had been bred and born in the country! But Tom Howells, and Samuel Jenkins, and Mat Lewis, and various others quite agreed with her in thinking she was not a girl to be shut up with an old lady in the country—at least on the turnpike, out of the town—so, after a few lectures from Mrs. Jones, and retorts from Nelly, the pair separated, not without many warnings from the former, touching the impropriety of a young girl's talking to young men of an evening, at the back door or through the kitchen window.

Nelly had a great mind to try an inn again, it was so amusing; but, then, her newly acquired gentility! She was too ambitious to retrograde in the world. It so happened that we wanted a servant, and Nelly, hearing of the chance of taking another step in life, came to offer.

We shall not forget the first appearance of this young damsel and her mother. Mrs. Morris entered, followed by her daughter, each curt-

seying in time and tune to the measure of the other. The mother was rather tall, thin, upright, of bronzed complexion and of great seriousness of countenance. The daughter was exactly the reverse. Rather short, plump, of pink-and-white complexion, and of the utmost jollity of countenance. They were dressed much alike, which made the contrast still more remarkable. The smooth black hat, red and black striped flannel gown, full-bordered cap and small shawl, seemed iden tical, until you analyzed them a little. The elder's were scrupulously plain, and put on with an exemplary neatness and precision that told of prudence and sobriety at a glance; the younger's had a more jaunty air, that you felt but could not describe. There were a few most becoming pink loops of satin ribbon in the border of the cap, that looked, in the presence of the prim head-gear of the parent, half-ashamed of themselves. There was a splendid red and yellow border to the kerchief, that quite cast into the shade the sober brown of its companion. Moreover, there was a bow of pink ribbon confining a small plain collar, that evidently did not know whether it ought to appear or not, and which we perceived Nelly trying to hide under her shawl. The petticoats of the daughter were also much fuller, and fell more gracefully than did the scanty, tucked-up skirts of the mother, and they were moreover less unfashionably short, and did not display quite so much of the foot and ankle. You perceived the hand of progress in the attire of the maiden, which the matron, like many others of her age and country, utterly disdained.

Mrs. Morris could not speak English, and we could not speak Welsh. Nelly "had a little English," but had not the fluency she afterwards acquired in the tongue her country was slowly and unwillingly adopting. When we addressed the mother in English, she looked at her daughter, who appeared so very shy and modest that we fancied we should make little of her. We were deceived in our first impressions, which were drawn from a head hanging very much over a pair of bright green cotton gloves, that were pulling one another out of shape. But when we addressed her directly, so as to require an answer, such a pair of eyes looked up from the green gloves as do not fall to many of her sex. Those eyes were an agreeable surprise; they were such uncommon eyes, so purely hazel and lustrous, and so indescribably mischievous. They were full of little sunbeams, shooting out rays on all sides. Golden hazel was the true colour. They laughed when they looked at you, and you wondered whether their owner were really indulging in a sally of mirth at your expense or not. The dimples in the fair, round cheeks would not be kept in order, and Nelly had not been five minutes in the room, before she showed a set of the whitest and most regular teeth that it was ever our lot to look upon, sparkling beneath the reddest lips in the world. It would evidently have been impossible for Nelly to help laughing. We could not tell whether it was boldness, gaiety

of heart, or shyness, but the laugh came almost as naturally as the words, and she never dreamt that it was wrong to laugh. Her mother looked at her reprovingly, but Nelly did not choose to understand.

There was something in the girl that took you by storm: so forward, yet so innocent; so vain, yet so unconscious of vanity; so perfectly at ease, yet so well-mannered.

Of course we put the usual questions, but we might as well have let them alone, for Nelly, in her own estimation, could do everything. She was, if you could bring yourself to believe her, a first-rate cook, housemaid, parlour-maid, nurse—in short, had we wanted her as lady's-maid she would have declared herself equal to the situation. When we came to the "character," she laughed more merrily than ever.

"Upon my deed, ma'am, I don't know if Mrs. Jones will give me one; but she have no call not; the old scold!" was her answer.

By degrees we elicited that she was to leave Mrs. Jones because it was so "lonesome" in the country that she could not help talking to the people as they went by, and Mrs. Jones expected her to be "deaf and dumb." If Mrs. Jones would not give her a character, Mrs. Thomas, "the Half Moon," would.

We were scandalized at the idea of an inn. We were afraid she was accustomed to gay and giddy habits, and we required a very steady servant who would never leave the house.

"Upon my deed, ma'am—when I say upon my deed, I——"

Here she was stopped short for want of the necessary English word, but we gathered that what she said "upon her deed," she invariably kept. "Indeed," and "Upon my deed," are slight Welsh oaths, stronger than the English "Upon my word and honour."

With some difficulty Nelly at last made us understand that, once in our service, she should never want to go out. She was naturally fond of being in the house, where there was always plenty to do. She liked working at her needle when she had time, and would be very glad to do sewing-work for us if we wished it. In short, if Nelly's account of herself were true, she would turn out the most wonderful servant that ever exacting mistress could possess. But that mistress must have been credulous beyond the credulity of mistresses in general, who believed one-third of what Nelly said. White lies evidently flowed as glibly from her mouth as truth; more glibly, I verily believe, for they came naturally, and she had generally to consider a little before she spoke the truth.

However, we were fairly taken captive by her extreme freshness and cleanliness. We had had such dirty servants, that the very sight of her pure white skin, cap, and collar was refreshing. She looked as if she *must* be neat, and even Mrs. Jones allowed that she was "very tidy"—the only unqualified bit of praise we got, when we wrote for her character.

It ended in Nelly coming to us, together with her box and bundle. They were all three at-home directly, and Nelly, in a very white apron, was ready in less than an hour to bring up the tea. We had a glimpse of her character at once. We resolutely continued to look upon the books we were reading, but we could not help being struck and amused by Nelly's performances, as we glanced aside at her. Half a dozen times she arranged the tea-service in various ways, and, between each new arrangement, stood at a little distance from the table, gently smoothing her hands, to consider the effect. When she was quite satisfied with her endeavours, she glanced over her shoulder at the mirror that surmounted the mantle-piece. There must have been a bow out of place somewhere, for she put her hand to her head, then glanced again at the mirror. Apparently pleased with the result of the last glance, she turned to reconsider the tea-service.

"Will that please you, ma'am?" she said, with a demure curtsey, letting her hands meet upon her white apron.

"Thank you—very nicely," we said, looking up from our books at the most regularly appointed tea-table we had ever had. Every cup and saucer was at an equal distance from its neighbour—every spoon at the right side of the cup—every plate arranged with mathematical precision. We were expecting a few friends, and Nelly must have been doubly anxious, for she said, "Will the company like their chairs put, please, ma'am?" There was another smoothing of the hands and glance over the shoulder into the glass as she left the room, which were frequently repeated during tea-time.

It was very evident that Nelly intended to take an interest in every person and thing belonging to us. She attended all our guests, most rigorously insisted on uncloaking and unshawling them, whether they would or not; placed all the footstools she could muster before their feet, and finally lingered so long that we were obliged to say, "Thank you, that will do," as a hint for her to leave the room.

But by degrees Nelly's bright, cheerful, cleanly face won the hearts of visitors as well as mistresses. She had a laugh, a curtsey, and a "how d'ye do?" for everyone that knocked at the door, gentle or simple. If the comer repelled her seeming familiarity, she evidently did not attribute the repulse to her own demerits, but would confide to us, that, "Indeed to goodness, she didn't like that Mrs. Lewis" (or Jenkins, or what not), "she was so oncommon stiff."

The dog and bird, our especial pets, were soon quite as much Nelly's property as our own. She was so proud to show off the talents of that prince of terriers, Gipsy, that we have seen him "sitting up" with a piece of bread on his head and a paper pipe in his mouth, on our very door-step, waiting for her to count six, surrounded by open-mouthed and highly diverted children of various ages. When the "six" was uttered, and the piece of bread went one way and the pipe another,

the shout of laughter was quite a scandal to our well-ordered household. We must be allowed, however, to have our share of pride in the exploits of Gip, and could scarcely reprimand Nelly for doing in her circle, what we were constantly doing in ours—displaying him to the best advantage.

It was pleasant and amusing to watch Nelly and Gip start upon their various errands. Nelly, attired in the most becoming costume, would be sure to meet a young man, who would be as sure to stop and speak to her, whilst Gip would alternately pull her short petticoats with a snarley "come on" sort of noise, and bark and snap at the feet of her admirer, in most ungracious defiance. And Gip helped on many a flirtation in this way—most unconsciously on his own part.

As to Nelly's admirers, they were not to be counted. If we ventured to expostulate, she would laugh her merry laugh and declare that the young men *would* talk to her, and that it would not be civil to pass them by without answering their questions. This was incontrovertible.

We observed two beaux of superior appearance, who used to pass and repass the house very frequently, stealing glances from under their hats into the windows, and we were afraid that Nelly encouraged them both. We once saw them meet before the door, and scowl ominously at each other; then they suddenly vanished from before our dwelling and did not appear again. We had our own surmises concerning the very dark, handsome, but somewhat sinister-looking young cabinet-maker, who was an attractive individual to many of our damsels, but we kept them to ourselves, and fervently hoped that he might never come near Nelly again. As regarded the fair, honest-looking tailor, we rather inclined towards him, though he was certainly not as good-looking as his rival. Which of these beaux it was that had carried off the greater proportion of Nelly's heart we could not discover; but she was grave and sedate for three whole days after their sudden disappearance, and scarcely went out of the house, unless imperative duty called her, for nearly a week. Matters wore rather a depressed aspect from Christmas until the fourteenth of February, when Valentine's Day seemed to bring a "change o'er the spirit of her dream."

We were all in anxious expectation of letters. If the birds tell their loves to one another and get married on this auspicious morning, why should not unfeathered choristers chirp out their half-fledged affections? We will not say how many letters we received, nor how many of them were valentines, but we had our share, and spent a profitable hour or so in wondering from whom they came.

But, Nelly! had she any valentines? We knew of the admiration she excited amongst our rustic swains, and longed to ascertain if it had found vent in these delightful missives. We had strong suspicions that she could not write, and had volunteered to teach her that useful art, but she said she had not patience to make such unnatural strokes and

turnings. Could she read writing? was the natural question. It was satisfactorily answered on the evening of the sentimental day. We perceived that Nelly had something of importance to communicate. When the tea-service was fairly cleared off, she still came to and fro in perpetual turmoil for every imaginable excuse. What had she broken? Could it be one of the best plates, or a cup and saucer, or, worse still, the sugar-basin? By means of deep religious and theological lectures upon lying, we had made her occasionally confess to such delinquencies; but then she usually rushed into the room with the broken article in her hand, a scared grin on her face, and a "Please, ma'am, I'm very sorry," on her lips. No; we had for the present escaped further losses in the way of crockery.

At last Nelly stood before the table, her head drooping, her dimples in full play, and a huge letter in her hand.

"Please, ma'am ——" a pause.

"What, Nelly—a letter?"

Here a little laugh broke out, and the white teeth were visible. She fidgeted awhile with the letter, and at last, making a great effort, said she had received it that morning, but had not been able to read it.

"A valentine, Nelly?" we asked, maliciously.

The dimples and white teeth were again displayed.

"He! he! Yes, ma'am, miss. I wasn't choosing for any of them girls to read her. She is very pretty."

We must here state, that although Nelly's English was improved, she had not yet learnt the neuter gender. To her everything was still either masculine or feminine.

Before we unfolded the large letter, we glanced, with ill-dissembled curiosity, at the address. It was in a fine clerkly hand, written with due care and thought, and with splendid flourish. Nelly evidently considered that we did not know how properly to free the letter from its envelope, and moved restlessly as we began.

"She too large for the cover," she said at last, as we found it difficult to extract the kernel from the shell.

Now Nelly was a picture for an artist. We should have liked a sketch of her at that moment. Fun and bashfulness strove together in her face, and made cheeks and eyes glow like Christmas fires. She was, as usual, playing with her hands, or rather with a smart bit of lace that adorned her sleeve-band. When we fairly opened the letter, she gave a suppressed titter; but we were soon lost in admiration. Nothing vulgar greeted us; none of the common herd of valentines full of red cupids and redder hearts, but the most elegant of designs in lace paper and gold. A border of flowers and leaves and birds, all snow-white, and in the centre what looked to be a square of gold and green. We wondered what hidden meaning lay under this type, and began to fear "green and yellow jealousy." But Nelly came to the rescue.

"He, he! She do open, she do," she volunteered, touching the centre piece reverently.

To our great admiration, the green and gold proved two folding doors, which, when unclosed, revealed a painting of the loveliest of damsels with the most graceful of youths at her feet.

We glanced up at Nelly, who was looking at us to watch the effect produced by this wonder of art. Giving us an expressive nod, she said, "That isn't all, for there's reading by here."

She pointed to a piece of silver paper still left in the envelope; we drew it forth, and found enclosed an embossed card, on which was a copy of verses entitled "Forget me not."

We began to read them aloud, and Nelly began to titter. We read on, and she laughed outright.

"Deet! and that's fullish!" she exclaimed.

"They are very pretty verses, Nelly," we remarked.

"Will you just be reading him again, please, ma'am, that I may recollect," she said.

We read, and Nelly laughed merrily.

"Shall you remember them?" we asked, finishing our second reading.

"If you would be pleased to read them only wanst more?" she suggested.

We repeated the lection, much to her satisfaction.

Again the depths of the big envelope were searched, and lying perdu in one corner was something that felt like a crown-piece, but turned out to be a gigantic white peppermint-drop, with a red-lettered but not illuminated surface. "I love you well" was the motto we had the pleasure of reading to Nelly, which caused a laugh more exhilarating than ever, and a blush so bright that one fancied morning was about to dawn upon our lamp-lighted world. But Nelly was not yet satisfied. She took up the now empty envelope and turned it round.

"Is this a B, ma'am?" she asked at last.

The post-mark was ill-stamped, and it was no wonder she was puzzled. We examined it well, and, after much patience, found it to be "Aberdare." She laughed again, and we had every reason to suppose the voluminous valentine had come from the right person. We conjectured him to be one of the two beaux who had so suddenly disappeared.

Whether we were right or wrong, Nelly was gay as a lark henceforth. The finery that had been partially, and we had hoped, penitently, laid aside, was reproduced and rearranged. A propos of this finery, we must confess that Nelly was no longer the plainly-dressed maiden she was when she came to us, with only the one bit of half-concealed ribbon. She was now almost as smart as any of the smart serving-women in the place. Every piece of ribbon or lace, every

collar or handkerchief, that we had thoughtlessly cast aside, reappeared refreshed. What she did to them we could not imagine, but they looked almost new. No more Welsh flannels and strong, sensible shawls, but merinoes or paramattas, or some still slighter material. We winked at all this, but when it came to a change of caps we could bear it no longer. Be it understood, that, in those parts servants really wore caps. In the first place, Nelly's strings disappeared, together with the kerchief that was wont to conceal the white neck, so that the very snowy portion of her person, her throat, was fully revealed.

"We have a very decided objection to fly-away caps without strings, Nelly," we remarked, severely.

"Deet, ma'am, them strings do cost money, and do get so dirty," was the reply.

But we would not give up our point, so a narrow bit of ribbon was substituted for the previously broad strings. This did not last long. One evening we perceived Nelly unusually attracted by the mirror as she crossed the room. She was continually on tiptoe, glancing at the charming reflection of her own face. We looked at her, and beheld one of those flat crown-piece abominations, just covering her crown and touching her back hair. We dared not attack this nondescript article at once, lest we should lose temper; but we were dismayed to perceive how becoming it was, displaying her rich brown hair and bringing out the espièglerie of her countenance.

We nerved ourselves to address her the next morning, when she was clad in discreeter costume.

"Nelly, if you wear those ridiculous caps you had on last night, we cannot keep you in our service. They are not respectable."

"Law, ma'am, all the girls do wear them. They are cheaper than them old-fashioned borders."

But we stood our ground, and discomfited her for three whole days. The fly-aways were abandoned, and she was very unhappy. On the fourth, the head was adorned as before. Fashion and becomingness got the better of obedience. She looked bashful when we glanced at her.

"So you are determined to wear those caps, Nelly. Then ——"

"Oh, ma'am, please! I ask your pardon. The others is all dirty, and seure this is very purty, and everyone do say she do suit me better than them old things."

"You will wash the others, and wear them," we said, imperatively.

After this, old and new alternated, until at last the old only appeared under the Sunday hat—for Nelly still wore the becoming Welsh beaver.

We were obliged to yield or give warning, and we could not part with Nelly.

To return to our valentine. Some days after Nelly received it, the postman's rap sounded and no letters reached us.

"Where are the letters, Nelly?" we inquired.

"None for anyone but me, ma'am," she replied, with conscious dignity, proud of the receipt of a second epistle.

In the evening, Nelly again appeared with a letter in her hand.

"Beg your pardon, ma'am, but—if missus don't mind——"

"You would like to hear your letter read, Nelly?"

"The girls do make fun and laff, if they are reading him."

"I will read it with pleasure."

We took the letter—delightful sight! A genuine and discreet love-letter, containing assurances of devotion till death, and so on. It was too much for her, as it was for us. We all laughed together, as she exclaimed, "Well, now, there's fullish he is!"

It was, nevertheless, a sensible letter; containing much less nonsense than many we had chanced to see of the same kind, written by abler penmen. There was a promise to return and claim his dear Eleanor—he did not use the abbreviated "Nelly," which probably sounded vulgar and familiar—and a hope that she was constant, and would marry him on his return.

"I hope you are constant, Nelly," we said.

"Deet, miss—ma'am—and I am not seure. Name o' goodness, does he think I be constant always? For a little bit, maybe."

"Oh, Nelly!"

"Ask your pardon, miss, but 'ould you be saying a few lines for me? I am thinking Thomas 'ould not be liking them girls to know."

We were in for writing a love-letter. It was very amusing.

"What shall I say, Nelly?"

"Oh, you do know very well, Miss, *fach*. Just as you do please. You do euse to write."

"But not your letters, Nelly. What do you wish me to say?"

"On my deet I've nothing to say, but that I'm very well, and not in no hurry to be married."

"But perhaps he won't like that."

"He, indeed! What matter? She must like it. I don't care."

It must be said that we wrote a sufficiently matter-of-fact letter, considering the occasion. We assured the lover of Nelly's health and happiness, and of her satisfaction that he was prosperous, then drew rather abruptly to a conclusion.

We read it to Nelly.

"That's famous! Dear! and there's clever!" she exclaimed.

"How would you wish to end the letter, Nelly?"

"Just as you do please. You are knowing best."

"But I don't know the sort of ending. Is it to be affectionate?"

"He, he! no, seure. He'd be proud. Yours treuly. But you are knowing best."

We compromised it by putting "yours sincerely," and so the matter ended for the present.

We thought that if there were more such love-letters, there would be less evidence in breach of promise cases.

In course of time there came another epistle. It greatly praised Nelly's "beautiful writing and polite letter," which made the little flirt show her white teeth.

"They did know at the post that you did write that letter. They are knowing your writing, miss—he, he!"

"How could they know my writing?"

We were getting rather ashamed of our part in the plot, but were not allowed to get out of it. We were trepanned by Nelly's smiles, her obliging temper, and good-servantism, into writing and reading many more love-letters, all singularly discreet, the last of which announced the tailor's intended return to his native valleys.

On the day following its arrival, Nelly came to us with a face half pleased, half disgusted.

"Beg your pardon, ma'am, but—he! he!—that old fool, Joe, the carrier."

"Well, what of him, Nelly?"

"He do want me to marry him."

"But that is impossible, because you are engaged to Thomas."

"Ah! That's what I am saying. If it wasn't for that valentine, now!"

"You are surely not repenting, Nelly?"

"Well—not 'sactly. But Joe, she tell me she have a new cart and horse of his own, and lots of money—and Thomas, she have nothing of his own."

"I hope you have not been encouraging that other man, Nelly."

"No; I tell him I have nothing to say to him. But he show me a bag of money and say it was all for me."

Nelly was evidently repenting. We gathered by degrees that if Thomas did not return soon, she was sure she could not be constant, indeed, it was only that beautiful valentine which had made her think of him at all, for there was another young man after her, who was "such a beauty, and had a colour like—like—her scarlet shoal." As to the carrier, she couldn't bear him; but she liked a nice house and plenty of money, and if Thomas didn't come she wouldn't wait.

When we answered his letter, we perceived that she was much more anxious than before. We were to add, what she declared to be true, that her parents didn't like her to "keep company" with anyone who hadn't a settled home and trade. Thomas, we found, was only a journeyman tailor. Also, we were to add, that uncertainty made her unfit for work in her place. She said this with a grave air, and meant it, white lie as it was.

The upshot of it all was, that a few evenings after the dispatching of this letter, a lively demonstration on the part of Gip was heard,

whose barks and gambols were evidently the overflowings of a great joy. Thomas had arrived. Nelly's face proclaimed the news.

"Have you seen the carrier lately?" we asked.

"Deet, no; and I don't want to. Great ugly chap!"

"Remember you mustn't go against your parents' wishes, Nelly," we added, maliciously.

"They do be willing, miss. And Thomas do say you are writing beauty letters," she said, showing her teeth.

She lingered about until we asked if there was anything else.

"Beg your pardon, but if you 'ould just write my name clear on this paper, I 'ould be much oblige."

We wrote "Eleanor Morris" in large letters, and then she left the room.

A few days afterwards we picked up an old envelope covered with "Eleanor Morrises" of every size and shape. It was impossible to say what the capital "E" was like, but we began to perceive that Nelly was practising her signature against the wedding. We thereupon made her a round-hand copy of her name, which greatly delighted her, and in course of time she wrote it respectably.

The wedding took place, and we lost one of the merriest, nicest servants we ever had. She was married from the house of her parents, and only left us the evening before the happy day. Two hours after the important signing that made her and Thomas one, they came to call on us. We were surprised, but were determined to be gracious and congratulatory. No sooner did Nelly perceive us, than she rushed towards us, and without "by your leave," most audibly embraced us. We were rather taken aback, and wondered whether Thomas intended to do us the like honour; but he was content with a "grip o' the paw," eloquent in its way. "I come to show Mary how he put the tea. She know nothing. Thomas, go you away," cried Nelly, as soon as our pretty speeches were ended.

And Nelly insisted on remaining to instruct the new maid, while her husband wandered off for an hour or so.

They went to live in a distant town, where Thomas set up tailoring on his own account. We lost sight of them for nearly two years, when one day we heard Nelly's unmistakable laugh in the passage. We rushed out, and there were she and Thomas, disputing as to which should hold a fair, fat baby, the image of Nelly. It was settled by her putting the infant in our arms with a shout of laughter, and a "there's for you, miss, *fach!*"

Thomas and Nelly were getting on in the world, and had now a smart shop, Nelly assured us, "with all kinds of beautiful waistcoat-patterns in the window, and large plate-glass panes." But she was as vain as ever, and not one whit less merry and pretty than when all the young men were trying which should get the brightest glance from her wicked black eyes.

AN INTERLUDE.

"HYACINTHIA said nothing. She sat nervously pulling the swan's-down off her fan, whilst Eustachio stood leaning against the mantle-piece, his eyes bent upon her."

So far had John Bryan written, and then he had laid down his pen, leaned back in his chair, and given vent to a prolonged sigh. He was a big man, with a plain, clever face, but he did not look like a writer of romance; nor did he feel like one, to judge by the relieved expression which overspread his features at the interrupting sound of a lady's voice in the garden below.

"John! John!" it called. "Can you come down? Rose has come home all of a sudden."

John went down immediately, and in the garden found his aunt, Mrs. Clifford, and her young step-daughter. The latter, a very pretty girl, fresh and blooming as the flower whose name she bore, had been away on a visit, and had but now most unexpectedly returned.

"How do you do, John?" she said, giving him her hand. "I did not want to disturb you——"

"Oh, I am not particularly busy, Rose," replied John, quickly.

"No? Then do help me plant these ferns. Mrs. Lyon gave them to me the last thing, but they ought to be seen to directly." So saying, Rose led the way to her fernery; John, carefully bearing the basket of ferns, beside her.

They had always been very good friends, these two—not cousins, but as intimate as such; and as Rose tripped merrily along by his side, John gave another immense sigh, and confided his trouble to her.

"I am writing a novel, Rosie," he said.

"A novel, John!" she exclaimed.

"Yes—a novel, or novelette," he explained. "It is to come out in three parts, in the *Riff-Raff and Helter-Skelter Bi-Monthly Magazine*."

"Oh! John, what fun!" cried Rose, laughing. "Fancy *you* writing for the *Riff-Raff!* You, of all people in the world! What induced you to do it? And, pray, *is* it written in Latin?"

"I wish it were," answered John, disconsolately. "No. The fact is, Bellairs and Tom Grey persuaded me to do it as a recreation: they thought it would amuse me after my hard work; but I assure you novel-writing is far harder work than anything I have done before."

"Poor John!" said Rose, with sympathy. "Tell me what it is about."

"It is the story of a girl—a very nice girl, called Hyacinthia, and a young man called Eustachio. I thought," said John, apologetically, "that people always had odd, grand names in novels, and I had to think for a week before these occurred to me. In fact, I very nearly wrote and asked you, Rose. Well, they met several times, and talked, and went to picnics, &c.; that part I managed pretty well, but now they have fallen in love with each other, and as Eustachio is going out to India, he wants to speak to Hyacinthia, and be married. And now they are at an evening party, and—and—I don't know what in the world to make Eustachio say."

"What should *you* say in a like case, John?" said Rose, archly.

"I!" cried stupid John. "But I should never *be* in a like case!"

"Well," said Rose, rather disappointedly, "but what is their situation, pray?"

"I *did* want you here, Rosie," said John. "Moreover, I went down and asked my aunt what a young lady might wear at an evening party, and as soon as she had told me, I ran up quickly, and wrote it down. Then I asked what she might be doing, and my aunt sent for one of your fans, Rose, to show me how she might play with it. And there," continued John, comically, "I have left her pulling the swan's-down off her fan; and he, Eustachio, leaning over her. But I can't leave them there for ever!"

"No, indeed," answered Rose, gravely. "There will be no swan's-down left soon."

"What *shall* he say, Rosie?" urged John, despairingly. "I'm sure my friends meant well, but they never set me a harder task."

Rose looked at the great scholar, the author of several very learned and valuable treatises, and smiled very tenderly.

"Can't he say," she suggested, "'My dear Miss Hyacinthia, will you permit me to address your father on a subject with which, perhaps, the dictates of your gentle heart already acquaint you?'"

"*Would* a man say it like that?" inquired John, dubiously.

"How should I know?" asked Rose. "But you must make haste, John, or Hyacinthia's chaperon will be coming to say the carriage is announced."

"Yes, it is dreadfully awkward; I must make him say *something*," said John.

"Or poor Mr. Eustachio will grow perfectly crooked—his is the most awkward situation of all," put in Rose.

"I wish one need not bring love into tales. Tom Grey told me it was indispensable: but the fact is, I don't understand it. And if you won't help me, Rose, I must give it up."

"Help you to understand the indispensability of love?" asked Rose, demurely.

"No, no, Rosie! Tell me what Eustachio is to say."

"If his name were *John*, or something common, I might improvise a speech," said Rose. "But Eustachio!—to make a Eustachio speak is too much! I must think upon it. In the meantime, let us set to work."

They had reached the fernery, and now began to busy themselves with the plants in silence, Rose now and then heaving little sighs, to which, however, John paid no heed. At length he asked abruptly why she had come home with so little warning.

Rose grew very red. "Ah, John," she said, "it was for such a foolish reason, I hardly like to say."

"What, Rosie! Not to an old friend!"

Rose cheered up a little. "Well," she rejoined, "I left because —because—somebody was there whom I didn't like."

"But how did that matter?" said John. "Could you not both go your own ways."

"No," replied Rose. "At least, it seems he could not. He *would* like me, though I didn't like him. Was he not stupid?"

"Very stupid," said John.

Rose made no remark. At this instant a crashing noise sounded through the bushes, and a gentleman, with a pallid face and a very fierce expression, burst out of the shrubbery. Instinctively, Rose stepped back, and laid her little hand on John's arm; and, mechanically, he put his strong arm round her.

"Oh! John," she whispered. "It is *he!*"

"Good morning, Miss Clifford," said the apparition, advancing towards her. "Allow me to request five minutes of your time. As you left Mrs. Lyon's with scant ceremony, I have followed you to beg an answer to the question I asked you last night."

"I gave you one, Mr. Hill," said Rose, hastily. "I can only repeat what I said before."

"Repeat! repeat!" cried the stranger, testily, and starting forward. "You little flirt! you ——"

"You keep back, sir," exclaimed John, in a voice of thunder, and tightening his hold of Rose.

"Oh! John, I didn't flirt, I really didn't. I think he's mad," whispered Rose, without any stops, and beginning to cry.

"On what grounds do you prevent my holding speech with Miss Clifford, sir?" cried the stranger, backing a little at the sight of John's stalwart frame and threatening attitude.

"And on what grounds, sir," demanded John, haughtily, "do you trespass in a private garden, and insult a lady?"

"Sir, you are most impertinent," roared Mr. Hill, trembling with anger. "I—chanced to see Miss Clifford here ——"

"Sir, you will oblige me to extremities," replied John, who had

become quite calm. "Look here"—and he extended his right arm, still keeping his left around Rose—"if you don't go quietly away this very instant, I shall be compelled to throw you over the hedge."

"Sir! sir!" cried the little man, too much choked with rage to say more.

"Yes, sir," replied John, pointedly. "I said—*over that hedge.*"

"Sir, you are no gentleman," almost screamed Mr. Hill. "You, you——"

He could get no further. John made one stride forward, and Mr. Hill vanished. They heard him crashing back through the bushes, and then his voice called out, from a safe distance, "Sir, you have insulted me—I shall send you a lawyer's letter, sir!"—and then retreating footsteps sounded through the garden.

"Oh! John," said Rose.

"My dearest Rosie," said John.

No more ferns were planted that morning, although both stayed for a long time in the fernery; and when they returned to public life once more, Rose's hand was still on John's arm.

John went to finish his chapter before dinner, and Rose, according to promise, came to help; and it was wonderful, after this interlude, and with Rose looking over his shoulder, how glibly his pen seemed to glide.

* * * * * *

"'Hyacinthia,' said he, 'my dearest Hyacinthia, I can't get on without you. And you—oh, Hyacinthia! do let me take care of you for ever.'

"And Hyacinthia dropped her lovely head, and murmured——"

* * * * * *

The dinner-bell rang, and the writer a second time flung away his pen. But whatever Hyacinthia was about to murmur to her Eustachio, we may be sure Rose had whispered to John during the interlude.

PARKWATER.

By the Author of "East Lynne."

CHAPTER XIV.

AN EXPEDITION IN THE DUSK.

MORNING dawned. A beautiful, sunny June day. Mrs. Fred Lyvett seemed pretty well: a bright morning is always good for the spirits. She got up and was nearly dressed, when she heard a noise, as of shaking, in the dressing-room. She sprang into it with a gesture of fear. Mr. Lyvett, with some coats on his arm, had hold of the brass knob of one of the closets, and was shaking to get it open.

"Oh, don't do that!" she uttered, seizing his arm.

"Why, what is the matter?" he inquired, for her face was nothing less than a face of ghastly terror.

"You may break the lock."

"Sophy, dear, what ails you?" he asked, looking at her attentively. "Break the lock! Not I. And if I did, it need not put you out like this. This is a capital closet. I noticed it when I took the rooms. Lots of brass pegs in it, the very place for my clothes—as I and Mrs. Cooke decided. You will want the other one and the wardrobe. Where's the key of this closet?" he demanded of the servant, who appeared in answer to his peal at the bell.

"I don't know, sir," she replied. "It was in the door when we made the rooms ready yesterday."

"It is not in it now."

"I have not touched it, sir. I noticed last night that it was out, when I was putting the things straight."

"I must have it," said Mr. Lyvett.

Mrs. Lyvett interrupted. She had been standing with her back to them, one hand pressed on the dressing-table.

"Perhaps I took the key out," she said. "I can't quite remember, but I know I was looking in the closet. I will search for it after breakfast."

But even while she spoke these few words, she had turned her face away again to bury it in a drawer, and they could not see its shivering whiteness.

The maid left the room, and they went in to breakfast. When it was over, Mr. Lyvett rose. "Now, Sophy, this key."

"I will look for it by-and-by."

"But I want it now. I want to arrange my things at once. Otherwise you will be troubling yourself to do it."

"It will be no trouble."

"My dear, I shall do it myself. Be so good as find me the key."

She rose and left the room. But the moment she was in the bedroom, far from searching for the key, she sank down on a chair, wringing her hands; her whole appearance, her face, her attitude, bespeaking a state of wild alarm. Mr. Lyvett suddenly opened the door, and saw her.

"My dear Sophia, what *is* the matter?" A fit of trembling, violent as that of the previous evening, was shaking her now.

"What can it possibly be? You must have medical advice. When was it you experienced these seizures before?"

"It is nothing—nothing," she panted. "I did have them, some years ago. Frederick ——"

"My love?"

"Do not tease me to look just now for the key. I will get it for you by this evening."

"Oh, never mind the key. My things will do any time. Think of yourself. I'll ask Mrs. Cooke to recommend a medical man, and we will have him in at once. She is sure to employ one in the neighbourhood."

He was hastening from the room, but Mrs. Lyvett arrested him by a gesture and a groan—for it could not be called a word. "Call no one," she murmured. "Let me only be quiet, and it will pass away. It is an attack of the nerves, brought on by fatigue."

He stood and watched her: and presently she arose, languid but composed. She took his arm, and they went back to the breakfast-room. Two dark circles were round her eyes, and altogether she looked as her husband had never seen her look. He gently put her into the easy-chair, and drew a footstool before her.

"Now I tell you what, Sophy; you must not stir out of that chair all day. And if the trembling comes on again, take some brandy-and-water immediately. It did you good last night. You shall not go travelling again, if this is to be it. Shall I remain at home with you?"

"No, oh no," she eagerly answered: "you could do me no good. I only want quiet. You know you have a great deal to arrange to-day, and several people to see. Pray do not neglect anything."

"Well, I shall not go home to dine this evening."

"You must go—you shall go!" she exclaimed, with a vehemence that positively startled Mr. Lyvett. "I tell you, Frederick, any worry would only make me worse, and it would worry me dreadfully to know that you neglected this first invitation of your father's. It might render the breach irrevocable."

"Good-bye, then," he said, stooping to take his farewell. "But I can tell you my going, or not going, depends upon whether you are better. And be sure don't get worrying yourself with the luggage to-day. The things can wait until to-morrow."

Mr. Lyvett passed down the stairs, and as he was crossing the hall, met Mrs. Cooke. He had known her many years. Her son, now dead, had been articled to his father's house. He stopped to shake hands, and they turned into the parlour.

"I am sorry to hear Mrs. Frederick Lyvett is not well," she said.

"Not very. From fatigue of travelling, I believe. She says it will soon pass off. I wish you would go up and see her, Mrs. Cooke. And," he added, dropping his voice to a whisper, "if you think it anything serious, just send for a doctor, and say nothing about it to my wife until he is here."

He took his departure for the day, and in a short time Mrs. Cooke went upstairs. The young wife seemed very well then. She received her landlady haughtily, not to say ungraciously; and spoke in a resentful tone of her husband's having thought she needed special inquiry or assistance. Mrs. Cooke perceived the illness was not a welcome topic, and passed to another.

"Did the countrywoman take away the child yesterday?" asked she, in a friendly tone.

"Of course she did," was Mrs. Lyvett's reply, looking steadily at her. And nearly at the same moment she was taken with a fit of coughing, and had to rub her handkerchief over her face.

"So Ann brought me word, when I sent up to ask if you would like some food for him. But——I do not know how my sight could so have deceived me. I saw her go away, and it seemed to me that she had nothing with her. Where he was hidden, will, to me, always be a mystery."

"He was asleep in her arms, under her shawl."

"Well, no, that could hardly be. Both her arms were hanging down. I noticed her hands: she had one brown cotton glove on, and was carrying the other."

"She would scarcely leave her child a present for me," returned Mrs. Lyvett, with a forced laugh.

Mrs. Cooke cleared her throat, and looked another way, speaking hurriedly. "The woman mentioned to me some particulars; and said she had brought the child to leave him with you. I regret much that she should have spoken, for of course it is no business of mine; but I beg to assure you that I shall never think of mentioning the subject to anyone."

"I'm sure I don't know what she said to you," was the answer, delivered in a curt, discourteous tone. "And it is of no consequence. She is a woman who is slightly deranged at times, and is then given to

say strange things: but nobody notices her. I have occasionally given her some money in charity, and that is what she wanted yesterday. The child is her own, her youngest; but when the mania is upon her she disowns him."

Mrs. Cooke said good morning and betook herself to her own portion of the house. She found much food for reflection that day. Was she to believe the countrywoman's tale, or Mrs. Frederick Lyvett's? She inclined to that of the former, who not only appeared perfectly sane and sensible, but had honesty written on her face; which Mrs. Lyvett had not. Moreover, the countrywoman's tale carried probability with it; and the bringing back of the sixteen shillings, which she said she had been overpaid, corroborated it; as did the little bundle of the child's clothes. It was a disagreeable matter altogether; at least, that was the impression left on Mrs. Cooke's mind; and somewhat mysterious. In the first place, Mrs. Cooke could have positively affirmed, if necessary, that the woman had *not* the child when she departed. Carrying it, she certainly was not; yet where could it have been hidden? Under her petticoats? No. She was of slender make, and her lavender cotton gown hung down, flat and scanty, as peasants' gowns generally do hang. Yet it was equally certain that the child had gone, for Mrs. Lyvett could not have got him hidden in the house. How and when had the child departed?—who had taken him away, if not the woman? And yet, if Mrs. Cooke could trust the evidence of her own sight and senses, the woman had not taken him. Mrs. Cooke felt intensely mystified. However, as she repeated to herself, it was no business of hers, so she would not wonder any more about it. But the more she strove to follow this resolve, the less was she able to do it. The affair haunted her all day.

Frederick Lyvett came home in his cab to dress. How long that cab and horse would be his, he knew not: he was already making preparations for their sale. He had found a vast deal to do all day, what with one thing and another, and apologised to his wife for his long absence, as he stooped to kiss her, and hurried into the dressing-room.

He found the closet open, and his things placed nicely in it. His wife had done it. She appeared to have recovered, and she left her own dinner, just served, to go and talk with him. She begged of him not to leave his family for the sake of hurrying home, saying she should not wish to see him one moment before eleven. He was elated at her being so well, and descended at half-past six to his cab, which had waited for him. Mrs. Lyvett finished her dinner—with a very poor appetite, as it seemed—and had a cup of coffee brought to her.

The evening went on to dusk. Mrs. Cooke was shut in her back parlour, which opened to the garden, the servants were in the kitchen, when Sophia Lyvett, wearing a large shawl and carrying something

cumbersome, passed down the staircase in the gloom. Slowly and cautiously stole she, as if she dreaded even the creaking of a board, across the hall, whose lamp was not yet lighted, and out at the front door. She pulled the door to, but did not close it after her, dreading perhaps the noise it would make, sped through the gate, and turned towards the Regent's Park. The road lamp flashed on her face. Its features, as seen through her veil, were white as death, and her mouth opened with every laboured breath she drew.

She bore steadily on her road, but with difficulty, for she was not accustomed to heavy burdens. The road is tolerably lonely there; and every now and then, when not a soul was in sight, she leaned against a dead wall, or a railing, or a stone gate-post for rest. Once, when she was well-nigh exhausted, she sat down on a garden step. An unintentional movement displaced part of the shawl, and exposed what she was carrying. A curious-looking bundle, done up clumsily in some kind of black stuff, and tied round and round with enough string to make a ball. She had sat a minute when a policeman appeared, coming round the corner she had passed. She sprang up and darted away, helped on by unnatural strength.

She came to the Regent's Park; it was no great distance; and was entering it, when another policeman appeared, coming from it. She turned short round, and stood back against a dark wall. She knew her way quite well about the locality; for, before settling at Brompton, she had tried this neighbourhood, had stayed in it for two months, hoping to pick up pupils. The policeman did not see her; he turned off the other way; and as the echo of his footsteps died away in the distance, she went on again and entered the Park.

When she came out of it, her arms were free; what she had carried was no longer in them. Hailing a cab that chanced to be passing, she got into it, giving the driver only a word of direction: that of the road in which Mrs. Cooke's house was situated.

"What part of it?" he inquired.

"Drive on. I'll tell you when to stop."

She sat in it, panting and breathless, shaking as she had been shaking at home on the previous evening. She let the man drive past her house some slight distance, and then stopped the cab. The fare was very trifling, but she put half a crown into his hand, and walked *on*, away still from home. Cabmen, as a whole, are suspicious men, remarkably wide awake. This one glanced keenly at her face through her veil, and looked after her. Then he turned his horse round, and drove slowly back, looking out for a fare.

When the cab was out of sight, Sophia Lyvett turned and approached her home. No lights were in the drawing-room, so her husband had not returned. That was fortunate: she had not felt perfectly sure that he would not come home early, in spite of her injunction: but another

circumstance was less so. The door, which she had hoped to find on the jar, as she left it, was closed; and she could not get in unseen, as she had wished to do. The hour she did not know, but thought it might be half-past ten.

What should she do? She scarcely liked to knock and enter, and face the surprise as to her proceedings at so late an hour. An idea came over her that if she could go in with her husband it would be thought she had but gone out to fetch him. Yes, she would wait, and do that. The shutters of Mrs. Cooke's parlour windows were closed. So much the better: the prying eyes of that lady could not be upon her.

Sophia paced back along the garden path to the gate, and paused there, in the full light of the gas-lamp. At that moment a cab drove past. She did not recognise it; but the driver recognised her as the liberal fare he had recently set down. He had met another fare, a cab full, whom he was driving home. He turned round on his box, and noted the house: no fear that he would not know it again.

Another cab came up, a private one, and stopped at the gate. Mr. Frederick Lyvett's. Fred jumped from it, and his groom drove off immediately.

"Why, Sophia!" he exclaimed, in a very access of astonishment, as he entered the gate and encountered her. "Is it *you?*"

She laughed loudly. "I put on my great shawl, and came out to walk up and down before the gate, waiting for you. It was hot indoors, and the night air is pleasant."

But he seemed rather cross; seemed to think the proceeding an extraordinary one; and, while they waited for admittance, recommended her not to do it again. Sophia fancied that the servants stared curiously at her: nothing in the world is so imaginative as conscience. Both the servants were in the hall: the one opened the door to admit them, the other was speaking to her mistress. Mrs. Cooke was sitting in her parlour near the door, which was wide open.

"Good evening," said Mr. Lyvett, halting to speak. "A warm night, is it not?"

Mrs. Cooke rose and came forward. "Yes, it is, very warm. You caused us a fright, Mrs. Frederick Lyvett," she added: and Sophia, who was hastening up the stairs, felt at these words compelled to turn. "When Ann came up to light the hall-lamp, she found a beggar boy in the hall: a young man, indeed; a great, strong, ill-looking fellow. He pretended to ask for bread, but it is a mercy she saw him, or we might all have been attacked in our beds to-night."

"How did he get in?" quickly asked Mr. Lyvett.

"We could not imagine how," said Mrs. Cooke, "until we found Mrs. Lyvett was out. You must have left the door open," she added, looking at the lady. "If you will kindly take the trouble to ring when you are going out, one of the servants will be at hand to show you out

and close the door after you. Perhaps," she continued, smiling, "Mrs. Lyvett is not accustomed to London, and little thinks that the streets and roads are infested with thieves and vagabonds, ever on the watch for plunder."

"Oh, Mrs. Lyvett has lived in London all her life," was Fred Lyvett's reply. "Had you much trouble in getting rid of him, Mrs. Cooke?"

"No. I thought it best to conciliate the gentleman, and called the cook to give him some broken victuals. He then asked for old shoes; and I was obliged to threaten him with a policeman before he would quit the house."

"It is the police who are to blame," returned Mr. Lyvett. "What right have they to suffer these fellows to be prowling about the roads at eleven o'clock at night?"

"Oh," said Mrs. Cooke, "it is an hour and a half ago. More, I think."

"I hope you will not be troubled again with such a customer," concluded Fred. "Good night, ma'am."

His wife had run upstairs, and he followed her. The servant had also gone up with lights. "Sophy," he said, as the girl withdrew, "you must have been out a long while. Where can you have been?"

"Only walking about, watching for you. I told you so."

"Don't go letting yourself out again, my dear, in that odd sort of clandestine way. And at night, too! Ring the servants up and let them wait upon you. It is different here from that place you were in at Brompton. Mrs. Cooke is a gentlewoman, you know, and accustomed to proper ways. Besides, you are Mrs. Frederick Lyvett now; don't be afraid of giving necessary trouble."

Mrs. Lyvett turned the conversation off. She was very tired, she said, and should go on to her room and undress. Fred nodded, and said he would follow her presently.

She had no further attack of trembling that night. But she tossed and turned from side to side in wakeful restlessness: and, when she did get to sleep, she moaned and started so repeatedly that her husband obtained no rest.

"I am sure," thought he, "that honeymoon journey of ours must have been too much for Sophia! Travelling does upset some people; I suppose she's one."

CHAPTER XV.

THE CHILD.

On the following Monday evening there sat in a room at Rotherhithe a small collection of country people, men and women. A discontented

expression was on their faces; and not without cause. They were from Suffolk, intended emigrants to Sydney, who ought to have gone out of dock on the previous Saturday, but from some bad management, which they could not or would not comprehend, the ship was to be detained for another week; and they rebelled at the delay.

"A-boxing of us up in this here wicked Lunnon, as is full of accidents and revellings!" cried a woman, who was spelling over a newspaper. "A poor innocent lamb they have been a-drownding of now. A pretty little fellow, with flax-coloured hair, it says."

"Read it out, Goody Giles," said some one of the company.

Goody Giles preferred to tell it. "He were found in a place they call the Regent's Park. A gentleman were a-passing along, and his dog jumped into the water and fished up a bundle, which they think had lodged on the side, without sinking. They got it out and opened it, and it were a poor little boy."

"When was it? How big was he?" inquired one of the men.

"It were last Friday morning, and he looked to be a-going on of two year," replied Goody Giles. "His frock and pinafore was of blue cotton."

Another woman, seated at the window, turned round her head. "What else do it say?" she asked, in a quick tone.

"Well, I don't mind as it says much else. Tam, take the news, and look."

"Tam" took the newspaper, and ran his eyes over the account. "Yes, it does, mother. It says as there's a reward of £20 offered. And he had got on a shirt and petticoat clumsily marked 'R. P.' in grey worsted."

"Hey, Mrs. Thrupp! what's the matter of you?"

For Mrs. Thrupp had risen from her seat at the window, and stood as if petrified. "Forgive me if I'm wrong!" she breathed, "but it's just the likeness of little Randy."

"Thou foolish woman!" uttered her husband. "Thy thoughts be tied on nought but that little 'un, night and noon. Thee'll get crazy about him shortly."

"Randy wore his blue frock and pinafore the day I left him."

"For the matter of that, Mother Thrupp," interposed Peter Miles, "there be two or three hunderd children in blue frocks and pinafores in this town of Lunnon alone."

"And that's the very mark of his shirt and petticoat," persisted Mrs. Thrupp, paying no attention to the rebuke. "I thought his folks might be fashed at seeing no mark, for ladies is particular, and when I were a-mending up Thrupp's stockings, ready for the start, I took the needle and worsted, and marked his three shirts and his two petticoats; R, for Randy, and P, for Penryn."

"R. P. is but common letters," interposed Robert Pike, "and stands for many a name. They stands for mine."

"Don't take no note of she, Robin," cried John Thrupp; "her head's turned with losing the little urchin."

Mrs. Thrupp said no more. But she took up the paper and read the account for herself. It stated that the bundle had been tied round with much string. Upon cutting the string off, and opening the enclosing stuff and the newspaper inside it, a poor little dead child was discovered, with a cord round its neck: and the cord, drawn tightly, was evidently the cause of death, not drowning. A fair little boy, apparently getting on for two years old, dressed in underclothing marked "R. P.," and a frock and pinafore of dark blue print.

Mrs. Thrupp noted the address of the police-station where application might be made, and the body of the child seen. When she was alone with her husband at night, she told him she should go and ask to see it.

"Thee'd never be so soft!"

"I must satisfy myself. Something keeps whispering me that it's little Randy. I told you his mother shook him and hit him, a'most like a dog a-shaking a rat."

"A pretty figure thee'll cut, a-going to own a drownded child, when thee gets sight on't, and find it's one thee never set eyes on afore!" exclaimed John Thrupp.

"It's only my time and a walk," remonstrated the woman; "and my mind'll be at rest. While we be kept a-waiting here, we have got nothing to do, now all our things is aboard."

The same evening that these several labourers and their families were conversing together, there appeared at the police-station mentioned in the advertisements, a shrewd-looking man, airily attired about the neck and waistcoat. He demanded to see the inspector.

"What for?" inquired an officer in attendance.

"Something touching that child that has been found," was the answer. "If I can't see the inspector now, I'll come again."

"Go in there," said the policeman.

The man went into the room indicated, and stood before the inspector: who heard what his business was, and inquired his name.

"John Ripley."

"Who and what are you?"

"I was well-to-do once, but I got down in the world, and I have lately been reduced to drive a night cab. I tried a day one, but I had to pay sixteen shillings to its master every morning before I took it out, and I could not make it answer. I pay six shillings for the night one."

"Its number, and its owner?" continued the inspector.

John Ripley satisfied him; also in various other particulars, relating to himself. Some of his answers were written down.

"And now," said the officer, "what have you to say about this affair?"

"First of all, sir, I want to know whether the reward will be paid to me, if I point out the person who put the child in the water? Because that person," shrewdly argued the man, "may not have been the one who actually killed it."

"If you can indicate to us the individual who put the baby where it was found, and through that information the actual guilty party or parties be discovered and taken, you will be entitled to the reward."

"And receive it?" added the man.

"And receive it," said the inspector, with a checked attempt at a smile. "Now go on."

"Well, sir, last Thursday evening I took out my cab at nine o'clock, and for more than half an hour not a fare did I get. Then one hailed me, and I drove him all up to the Regent's Park, and onwards to the north side beyond it. I set my fare down, and was driving back, when a woman came out of the Park, put up her hand, and made a noise."

"How made a noise?"

"Why, she had tried to speak, but was so out of breath she couldn't, and only a noise came from her. I got down, opened the door, and she scrambled in. I have seen many a one make haste over getting into a cab," continued the speaker, "but I never saw one tumble in as quick as she did. She was like a hare that the dogs are after. 'Agate Road,' she said to me.

"'What part of it?' I asked.

"'Drive on,' she said. 'I'll tell you when to pull up.' So I did as she told me, and ——"

"What time was this?" interrupted the officer.

"I can't say to a few minutes. Between ten and half-past."

"Proceed."

"I drove up the Agate Road; and presently she pulled the string, and I jumped off and let her out. I thought I should get a shilling from her, but she puts half a crown into my hand, and goes away, on further, up the road."

"Is that all?"

"Not quite. I turned back with my cab towards the Park, plying for a fare, and had not gone far, when a gentleman, two ladies, and two children hailed me, and got in. *They* told me to drive up the Agate Road, and I did so; when, in passing a house, beyond which I had driven her, I saw the same woman—or lady, whichever she was. She was standing inside its gate, looking up and down the road."